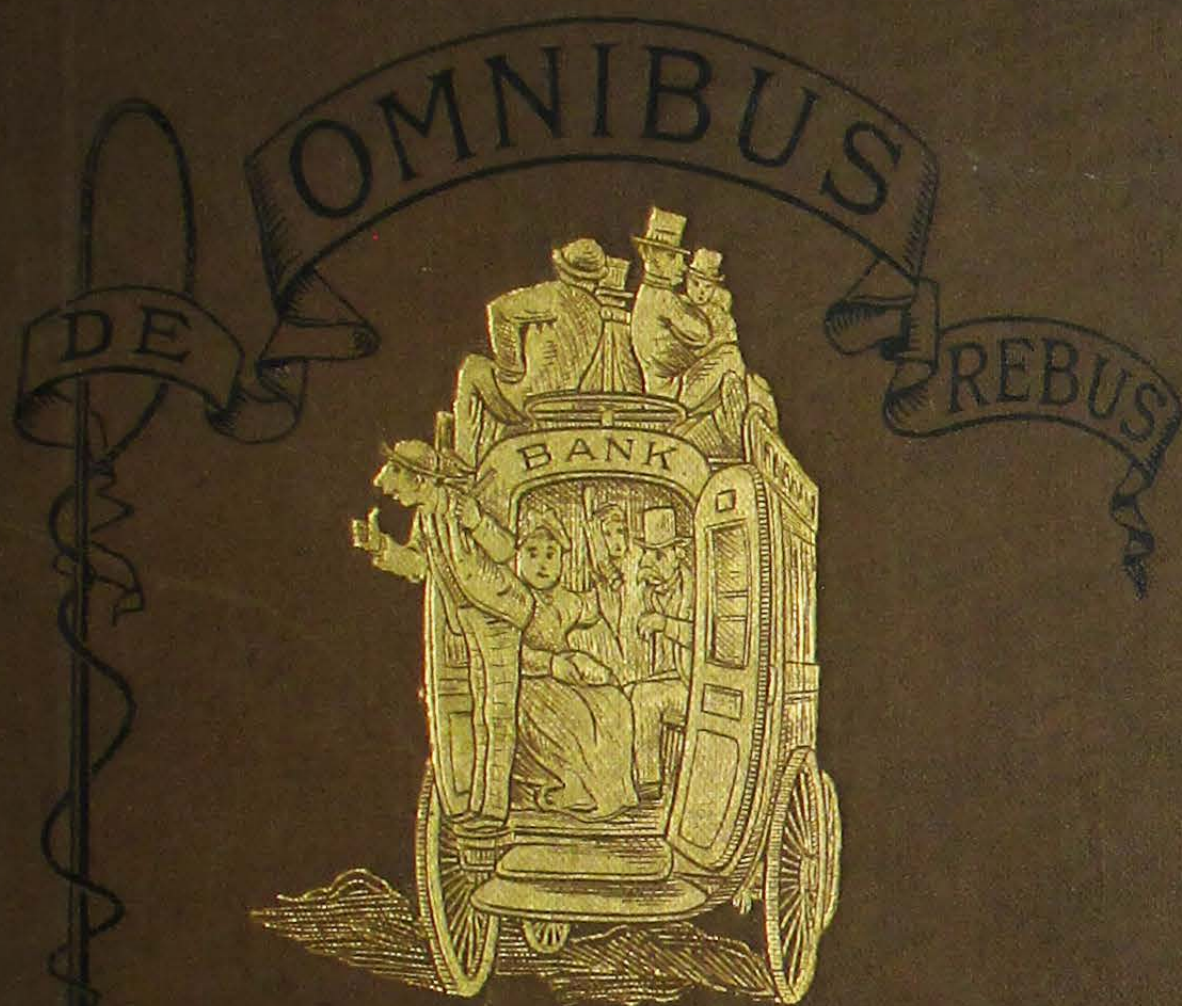




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DISCURSIVE RAMBLINGS
ON THE ROAD OF
EVERYDAY LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"FLEMISH INTERIORS"

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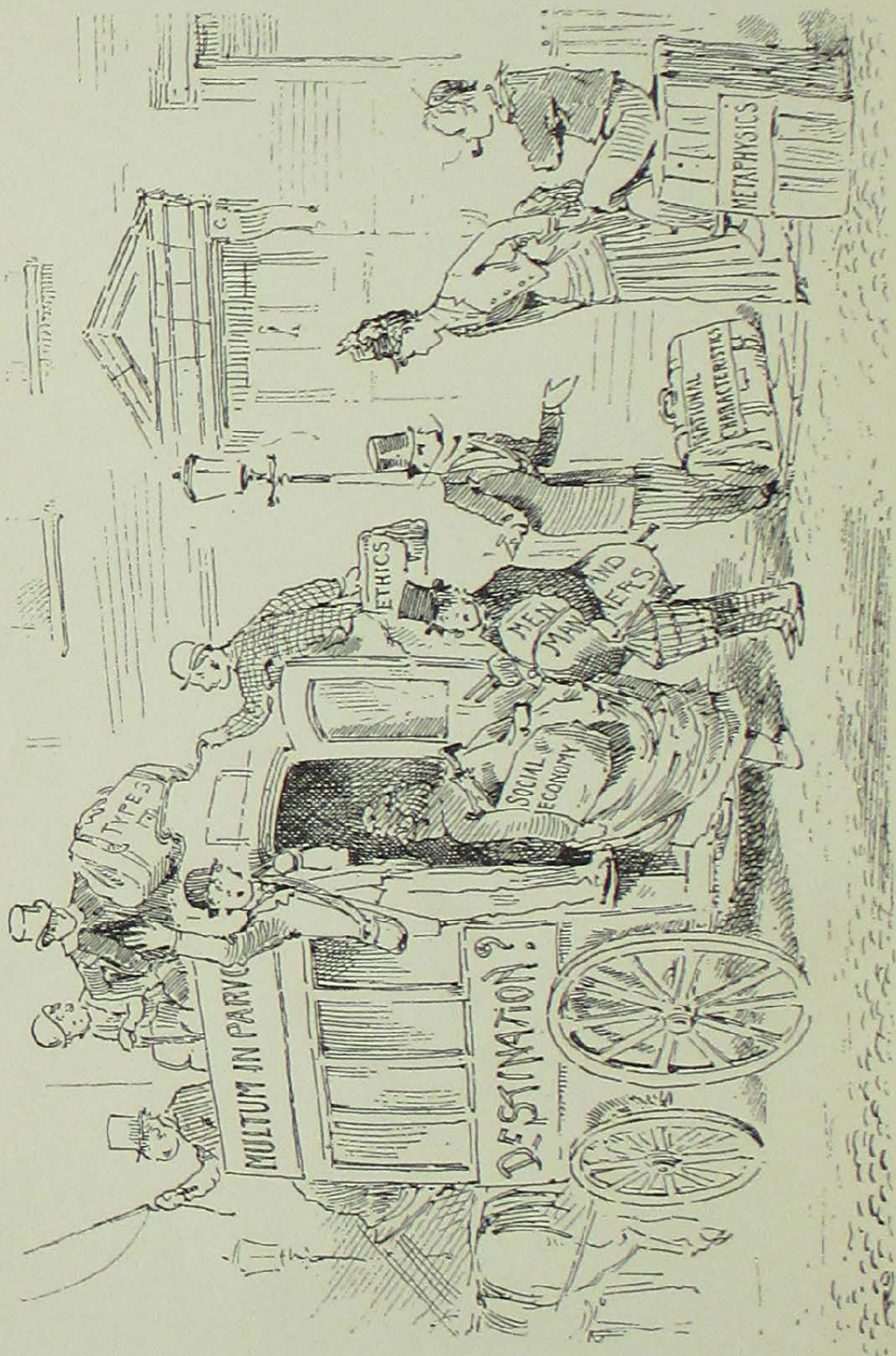
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DE OMNIBUS REBUS.

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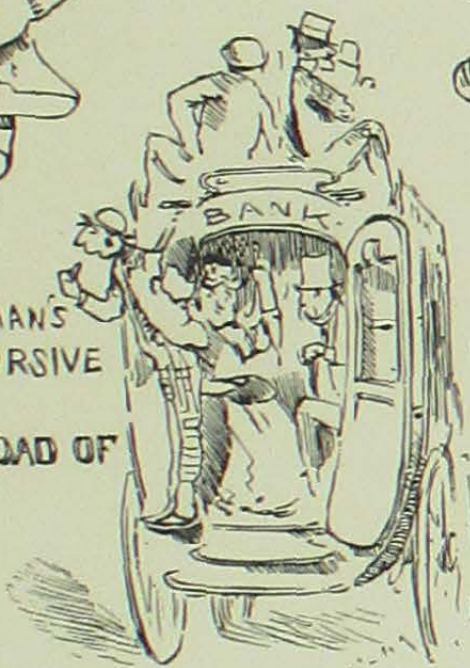
R. CAULFIELD ORPEN

LONDON.

JOHN C. NIMMO

14, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1888.



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DE OMNIBUS REBUS

An Old Man's Discursive Ramblings

on

The Road of Everyday Life

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"FLEMISH INTERIORS"

VE.D 21

Mrs. William Pitt Byrne.

With One Hundred Illustrations

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PREFACE.

L'Omnibus est le char du progrès.—E. ABOUT.

HAVING chosen the popular locomotive as the vehicle in my narrations and reflections *de Omnibus rebus*, I take leave to say a word on its history and antecedents.

It is, I think, a prevailing idea that the Omnibus is an institution of upstart pretensions, mushroom growth, and vulgar purpose. Now I believe this impression to be an altogether erroneous one, and also that even though it may have derogated in its intermediate days, its present uses have become as elevated as those with which it originally started. So far from being a thing of our times, it took its venerable birth from the imagination of Pascal, of Port-Royal fame, under the auspices of the Marquis de Roanne, through whose influence it tried its first tottering steps in the streets of Paris in 1672. I am sorry, however—sorry for the blindness and stupidity of those who failed to appreciate its benefits—to be obliged to state that it enjoyed but a short life of six years; various attempts made to resuscitate this public luxury proved futile owing to the

narrow views of the *Administration*, who probably conformed them to the narrow dimensions of the streets, on the plea that the continual stoppages, which were necessarily a part of the system, interfered with the public traffic.

I must remark that the style of coquetry in which the early omnibuses were got up was inconsistent with the possibility that the concern should be a profitable or even a remunerative one. Although the fare was only five sous, the vehicles were not only costly in construction but pretentious in decorations, carrying on their panels the insignia of aristocratic distinction. Like the shield of France, they were (to employ heraldic terminology) of an *azure tincture powdered with fleurs de lis or*, and the driver wore a livery: conductor there was none. They were arbitrary in their regulations, starting at a fixed hour, and exclusive in their restrictions, refusing to carry plebeian passengers such as pages, lackeys, and even mechanics and soldiers.

About the year 1800 a Hackney-carriage had been projected for fourteen inside passengers, and went on for some little time; it was, however, of rough and ponderous construction, and its structure so unlike any coach-building of our times that it is to be regretted a specimen has not been preserved and museumed for comparison with the more civilised and agile vehicle familiar to ourselves: it had six wheels, and was drawn by four horses! What need we say more?

It was Baudry who claimed the credit of this inven-

tion such as it was, although it ultimately proved a failure—at least in that form: he, however, still had faith in its future, and did his best to extend it to all parts of the world, even to Egypt—the Egypt of that day!

Lafitte the Banker, of picking-up-pins memory, tried to establish an omnibus system in Paris in 1819, and strange to say, the existence of omnibuses in that capital proved fatal to the *branche aînée* of the Bourbon dynasty. It is said that the accidental upsetting of one of these ponderous machines in a narrow street first suggested the value of a barricade and thus changed the whole science of revolutions. We may remark, however, that a barricade of vehicles had been employed as a strategical expedient in London more than two centuries before.

In 1826 the omnibus system took a fresh departure in France, though not in Paris. It was started at Nantes by the indefatigable M. Baudry after a persevering but thus finally successful opposition to the *Préfecture de Police*; but it was only in 1838 that omnibus traffic was seriously resumed in the capital, and under a modified and improved organisation. The fare which had been formerly fixed at five sous was advanced to six, on account, it was alleged, of the higher cost of forage.

At first, the upper-middle public—inconsistently ignoring their own national *blague* of “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*,” and influenced by the prejudices of class—were unwilling to patronise the accessible cushions of the common street conveyance, till one day the Duchesse

de Berri, having taken a drive in one for a wager, the ice of conventionalism was considered broken, and such was the national flunkeyism that conveyance by omnibus at once became popular, a line being soon established along the whole length of the Boulevards. Once started, omnibuses soon passed into a necessity, and multiplied under various nomenclatures, fresh lines being gradually established in many directions; later on the "*correspondence*" was started with satisfactory results, and in 1853 seats at three sous were added, on the *Impériale*. In time the *Administration Municipale* saw fit to favour the fusion of the different lines, and in 1855 the *Compagnie Générale* was formed, to the great comfort and delight of the Parisians, who found only one complaint to make, viz., that these vehicles were not sufficiently numerous, and were, as they still are, especially inadequate to the public demands on Sundays and *fête* days.

On July 4th 1829 Shillibeer* started the first pair of omnibuses in London on the line between the Yorkshire Stingo and the Bank. They were unwieldy in shape and dimensions, and carried twenty-two inside passengers, being drawn by three horses abreast. The fare for the whole distance was 1s. either way, but the journey could be halved for 6d. In the earlier days of these vehicles, passengers were provided with copies of some of the daily papers, to while away the tedium of the journey, and probably also to mask the slowness of the pace at which they moved. It was Shillibeer who introduced the services of

* Vide his evidence before the Board of Health.

the conductor, and the two who took the charge of these two aboriginal carriages were the sons of two British naval officers; these were succeeded by men who wore velvet liveries. The earlier omnibuses went by the name of "Shillibeers," the word being painted in large letters on the side, and it is still recognised in New York. There used to be a joke on the subject in London, to the effect that "Shillibeer" was supposed to be the Latin for omnibus. These were succeeded by many desultory and contentious undertakings, till in 1855 a French company established itself in London and successfully set on foot a staff of omnibuses. After a time, however, it was found that a foreign organisation was not to the taste of the British public, so the plant, and indeed the whole enterprise, was taken off their hands in 1859 by an English association, under the name of the "London General Omnibus Co.," which has worked with excellent results to the public and large profits to the shareholders ever since. The advertisement spaces utilised by the directors and always filled, bring a large contingent to the sum realised by the Company. In that year the Company ran 600 omnibuses, and carried 38,899,247 passengers. In the year 1886 it ran 755 omnibuses, and carried 79,774,522 passengers. This increase in the figures after a lapse of nearly thirty years is not such as to surprise us, but we must bear in mind that an active competition by other companies as well as private 'bus-owners, yclept by *the* Company "pirates," has now for some time been waging a war of rivalry against it. Many of these adventurous attempts have, after a more

or less brief struggle for life and dividends, gone to the wall, and have ended by being only too thankful to the Company to buy up their plant; but there has been a certain "survival of the fittest," for whom there appears to exist sufficient occupation without interfering much with the business of the large and wealthy Company which has done so much to deserve success. I say this advisedly, for among all the advantages which civilisation has given us, is there one which adds more comfort to the detail of the daily life of *all* than this facility of locomotion? while to the impecunious of whatever class, a vehicle always at hand to carry them whithersoever their business calls them and at a price they can afford, is a boon the blessing of which I hardly think they duly appreciate. Let omnibuses strike for a week and then we shall learn their value and understand how difficult we should find it to return to the habits of primitive simplicity.

As this reminds me of an amusing anecdote, I will record it here. Prefaces have got themselves a bad name, and are seldom read because they are supposed to be "dry:" I will try to save the reputation of mine; and my anecdote—such as I give it you—is original, for I had it from the lips of that elegant and aristocratic Hungarian magnate, Count Edmund Zichy, so well known in all the capitals of Europe, and I assure you a most charming travelling companion:—but then what Magyar is *not* charming? He was speaking of the Batthyany family, one of whom was made a bishop: now Hungarian

prelates are wont to maintain a certain amount of state ; —most of us will remember the courtly but unflinching determination with which Cardinal Scimor, the Prince Primate, spiritedly declined when in Rome to do as Rome did and forego the accustomed escort of his Uhlans : it is true his lofty bearing is in harmony with the exalted position he upholds, being besides in all ways a remarkable personality. I may state from my own experience that he has made himself one of the most consummate polyglots, most distinguished scholars, and most fascinating conversationists of the age.

To return to the Bishop in question, who was in the habit of going about not in omnibuses but in his coach and six ! He was one day remonstrated with by a friend who did not consider such grandeur consistent with the character of a successor of the Apostles. “ For instance,” he urged, “ think you that St. Peter, though he was chief of the Twelve and head of the Church, would have indulged in such luxury ? ”

“ Also,” he contented himself with phlegmatically replying : “ Also, was St. Peter not the son of Count Batthyany ? ”

We may be pretty sure had the Saint been offered his choice between a coach and six to himself or a modest seat in an omnibus, he would have selected the humbler vehicle. Let us go and do likewise.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
The nomenclature of the omnibus—Its utility—London street-traffic—Overpopulation—Causes which might diminish it—Adulterated food and clothing, &c.—Hand-made bread—The consequences of witnessing the operation—Observations that can be taken in omnibuses—Conversation between two septuagenarian passengers—The subjectivity of human age—Longevity—Conditions under which it is or is not attained—Two interesting illustrations—A character—The skeleton in the Englishman's cupboard—The London dust-hole system—A Parisian's horror at it—Garrulity—The policy of silence—No voice so sweet to the majority as their own	I

CHAPTER II.

I introduce myself in an un-Irish fashion—I introduce the carriage and pair of the people—What should its plural be?—The advantages it offers—Things lost and things found in omnibuses—Purses—Umbrellas—Something about these—The art of lending them—The lending sovereign—I find a florin—A <i>portemonnaie</i> —Its pathetic little history—A yet more interesting find—I appropriate its contents and offer them to the reader—Provençal language and literature—The " <i>Félibres</i> "—A Provençal tale—Omnibus intruders—Flies, &c.—Insect assassination—Trespassers—A tale of a trespass—The Irishman's pig—The two Welshmen's pigs—Trespassers punished	27
---	----

CHAPTER III.

The course of an omnibus journey—The incidents it comprises—Their instructiveness—Newspaper imps—Their characteristics—Their manœuvres—Other hawkers at omnibus-doors—Penny-toy vendors—Automatic toys—Squeakers—Almanacs—Their premature appearance—Anecdote of Dryden—The "Unemployed"—Beggars—Their dodges—The "British Workman"—The value of an adverb—The outside of the omnibus—The omnibus-horse—His past, present, and future—Physiology of the omnibus-horse—The omnibus-horse of	
--	--

Paris—Treatment of horses generally—Retributive justice—The 'bus-driver—Drivers of public vehicles generally—Of cabs—Of street vehicles in Paris—The antecedents of these latter—Unfrocked priests—An anecdote—A Fulham 'bus-driver on Bishop Blomfield—A characteristic altercation—The knife-board—Exterior advertisements—Various others, within—Ingenious advertising tricks—A hint for harmless swearing— <i>Argots</i> various— <i>La langue verte</i> —Abbreviations employed by conductors—"Safeties"—Other matches—Exaggerating advertisements—An anecdote—Soap—Portrait trade-marks—Courting babyhood—Advertisements on paper bags—Paris advertising cabs—Tables, &c.—Ingenious modes of catching customers—Inexplicable indifference to retaining them	59
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Opportunities afforded by omnibus travelling for studying individual and class-character—Gradual change in the description of omnibus-passengers—Perceptible advantage of same—Our ephemeral relations with our kind—"Little" things—Dreamlike changes—What is the difference between the retrospect of a dream and of an event?—Ouida—Religio Medici—Lord Houghton—Palingenius—Sleeping and waking dreams—Theories of dreams—A remark of George Eliot's—An episode of travel which might be called "The seven (railway) sleepers."—Promiscuous meetings—Conventional observances—Meetings and partings	95
---	----

CHAPTER V.

A momentous meeting in an omnibus—Chances for the unspliced—Mixtures—Lettered men—Notabilities in omnibuses—Paris omnibuses—Ladies in and on them—Medical women—The medical wife—Relations between the sexes—Gallantry jeopardised—He-women—Proclivities and tastes and practices of the "nineteenth-century-woman"—Their results—Woman's influence lost—Why?—Madame de Staël—More men I have met in omnibuses—The Riviera omnibus—Its passengers—Originality of ideas notwithstanding want of education—A startling announcement	129
---	-----

CHAPTER VI.

People who "wouldn't be seen" in omnibuses—Pickpockets—"male and female"—A practical instance of their skill and their victims' credulity—"Beware of pickpockets"—Guilty conscience—An amateur actor rehearsing—A case of mistaken identity—Scripture-readers and Tract-distributors—Busybodies—A busybody snubbed—Group of a mother and child—The baby's dear stupid face—Its meditations—and my own—"Volunteer" lads—A well-informed Jewess—Discomfited for all that—Two poor poets—Modern poetry	153
---	-----

CONTENTS.

xv

CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
A man with a <i>tic</i> —Philosophical endurance of annoyances—The virtue of tolerance—Morality and metaphysics—A man with a stick—A stout American lady—Stout passengers generally—Illustrative anecdote—A dapper little man—His little ways and little plans—Glove buttons—Suspensions of what he has in his little mind—How I know what he is after—Little misfortunes—Are they "little"?—An accident—Significant arrangements—Inskipp's expedient—Courting—A confidential confession—A matrimonial episode—An opportune omnibus—What is it rules our destinies?—Fate—Law—Free-will—Faith—Lord Lytton's view—No escaping metaphysics—How Lord Byron courted his . . . fate—Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Johnson, fatalists—Mark Pattison's fate—Decided by an omnibus—So-called "renegades"—Unconscious Catholics—Rustic types—A Welsh story—a Welsh jury's verdict	177

CHAPTER VIII.

The dapper little man's sweetheart—The subjectivity of beauty—How the world receives reports of engagements—His doubts and apprehensions—His desperate resolve—And departure—A worn-out hero—His demeanour and probable antecedents—Politeness and officiousness—Anecdote of Lord Brougham—Tact—A man of the world—Examples—The ambassador's creed—A discriminating conductor—An amusing story and conversation overheard—A casualty—Its effects—Consternation—An attempted swindle—Baffled by the unusual appearance of a policeman—Changes—Analogy between an omnibus journey and the journey of life—A retrospective episode—Early scenes revisited—How changed—Physical changes—Moral changes—Moral identity—How does it affect moral responsibility—Two portraits—A wise child—Mistaken identity—Its effects on the mistaker—Subjectivity—Waltzing—The ballet—Ballet dresses—Lines on Waltzing	204
---	-----

CHAPTER IX.

" <i>Complet</i> "—notices—Why have we not an equivalent?—A Matrimonial Squabble—Love-matches—Their probable result—Philosophy—Experience—How often is it of any use?—Juvenal, Valerius Maximus, Socrates—All set at naught—The Tower of Babel—Raising the Voice—Dangerous, sometimes—"Young ladies"—Their audacious "costumes"—Girls of the same class in France—"Education"—The consequences of "a little learning"—Fronts and Postiches—Is a man no older than he looks?—Ninon de l'Enclos—Diane de Poitiers—The real " <i>age ingrat</i> "—Patching nature—Dyed Hair—Cheating Death—A Viennese idea—Beauty without intelligence—Is it Beauty?—A Railway accident—Where?—Locality makes all the difference—What we see and what we only hear of—Vivisection—A vivisectionary operation photographed—Its effect—A vivisectionary suggestion. . . .	236
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

PAGE.

London street-traffic—The haste of foot-passengers—The errand-boys— The apothecary's boy—Faith the best medicine—Telegraph boys— Telegrams—Varieties of import among these—The baker's young man often also Soosan's "young man"—More hurry worse speed—The "crawler" nuisance—Haste <i>v.</i> Hurry—A hastened marriage—Prestige —Even in matters of the table—Anecdote—Foot-passengers—Their self-centred aspect—What becomes of their momentary self-import- ance—Is it true that "Nothing signifies"?—St. Philip Neri—"After that?"—The little churchyard at Rothay—Wordsworth's grave there —A significant illustration—"Strangers yet"—Carlyle's "Past and Present"—Back to the vacated omnibus—Diminished standard of British stature—The ceaseless flow of traffic—Walking on two legs— Why not on four?—Ovid's view of the origin of the present custom— Evolution—Development from a philosophical starting-point—The "yellow primrose"—"What is life?"—Often asked, never answered —Vitality—Schopenhauer—Alfred de Vigny—Carlyle—The Talmud —De Quincey—Lord Lytton—Young—Corneille—Delavigne—Vol- taire—Sterling—Davenant—Crabbe—Robinson's remark—Words- worth's definition—Pope's description—Espronceda's view—Persius —Boileau—The first and second half of life—Nombelle—Byron's con- clusion—Life hereafter—An Oriental theory—The Upanishads— Bubbles—Vegetarians—Pisciarians—My journey's end	262
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Physiology of the Omnibus-conductor—Influences of callings on character —Principles found in the Talmud—Doctors—And Lawyers—Shelters —A She-conductor—Eccentricities of French character—French morals and French novels—Systems of collecting fares—The Paris Conductor—His ways—"Cabbages"—A Conductor who married, confident he could live on that vegetable—Sobriety of omnibus-ser- vants—The Bishop's coachman less sober—Risks of the Company— Tricks of Conductors—Vigilance of the Company—Discourtesies to the public—How visited by the Company—Hardships of the Con- ductor's lot—No tobacco, no Christmas-boxes, few tips—Monotony of his "calling"—A "standing" grievance—Subjectivity of Time— Unmelodious noises—their effect—An illustration—Sam Lover— Charles Lever—John Parry—Genius—Some particulars of a Con- ductor's daily tasks and habits—Temptations—Honesty—Anecdotes —Rivalries—Characteristics—the Conductor's end	302
--	-----

“ But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.”

—BYRON.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is a story told of one of the Lake poets, to the effect that, describing one day to Hannah More in what way the working hours of his day were distributed among his various studies, when he had finished the catalogue, that worthy lady looked up with calm, Quaker-like self-possession, and took all the shine out of him by quietly answering—

“And when dost thee *think*, friend?”

It might be well if we were all reminded that this is one—if not the most important—of our duties. It is not only a personal, but a social, duty, and must have been appreciatively recognised by the philosopher who declared that he was “never less alone than *when* alone.” To be alone with one’s thoughts *should* be equivalent to being in very good company.

Though we are seldom alone in a public thoroughfare or a public carriage, there is perhaps no moment of our lives in which our thoughts are more entirely our own to employ and improve as we please. The “solitude of crowds” may sound paradoxical, but it is one

of those expressive phrases in which the meeting of extremes shows that (however widely apart they may *seem*) they may yet touch without manifesting a perceptible boundary ; but the solitude of the streets is intensified when we are unmolested by dust or rain, unjostled by the multitude, undisturbed by the ceaseless struggle to make our way through them, and the solitude of a public carriage is therefore yet more complete: as Dumas has remarked with some subtlety, "*Rien n'isole les rêveurs comme le roulement d'une voiture et le bruit monotone des roues,*" and we must all have experienced this, whatever the character of the vehicle containing us (though the course of our reflections will naturally be shaped by the associations and the individuals who surround us), even though it be that most prosaic and plebeian one—an omnibus.

The rapid and ceaseless succession of thoughts that then passes through our mind, would probably startle us by its incongruity could we suddenly see written down the brain-workings of, say, half an hour. Whither indeed have we not wandered during that brief space of time, and with how many persons, living and dead, have we not conversed—with how many, whether *in esse* or *in posse*, have we not been in company ! Like the bee or the butterfly that flutters through a garden, now hovering over one flower, now settling for an instant on another, now skimming a third, we have semi-consciously touched, tasted, scented, heard and handled things good and evil, things sacred and profane, things sublimely poetical, and

things contemptibly prosaic; some probably suggested by an association to which we should hardly be able to trace them back by the time they have carried us away to their remoter ramifications.

Our glance at these incidents, which—trifling as they may seem in the abstract yet have their relative importance, since they go to make up the history of our life—is not always either superficial or futile, and as reflection applied to social interests modifies and matures our ideas and brings us into harmony as well as into closer community with our kind, why should we discourage the waking dreams which lead to these results?

I shall therefore make no apology for the vagrancy of my pages, which record such thoughts, but I will admit at once—

“If I have any fault, it is digression.”

It is, indeed, in the nature of an omnibus-passenger to digress: the nature of an omnibus itself is to move him in sundry places, what more natural therefore than that while it is carrying him in one direction his fancy should start off in another, in the pursuit of some stray idea suggested by he knows not even what, and should again pass onward from this to others, sometimes escaping his control, entangled in the fascinations of sentimentalism or lost in the enticing realms of imagination; but is *digression* a *transgression* when it is the result of—as Madame de Sévigné puts it—throwing the reins on the neck of one's pen and letting it amble on at its own sweet will into by-paths which attract it from the direct

road it is pursuing, especially if its divagations never lead it far from subjects interesting to our common humanity ; especially again, we might say, if a discretionary check be exercised over its wanderings. What said Catwg the Wise—(I hope you will never ask me to *pronounce* this unharmonious patronymic)—what said Catwg the Wise when he gave his seven counsels to Taliessen Chief of the Bards ?

We have it in a venerable tradition of the Principality, which, however, does not appear to have found its way into Guest's Mabinogion :

“ Before thou openest thy mouth, think

“ 1. What thou shalt speak :

“ 2. Why thou shouldst speak it :

“ 3. To whom thou art about to speak :

“ 4. Concerning whom, or what, thou art about to speak :

“ 5. What will result therefrom :

“ 6. What benefit it can produce :

“ 7. Who may be listening :

“ Then put the words on thy fingers' ends before thou partest with them, and turn them seven ways before thou utterest them, then there will never come any harm from what thou shalt say.”

It might be well if all speakers and especially all authors were to lay practically to heart this sapient advice ; but then what would become of the publishers ? Circulating libraries would have to shut up, reviewers could no longer distribute their brimstone and (occa-

sionally) treacle, and the British Museum would have to hire out its shelves. What a revolution in the (so-called civilised) world!

The advice Jeremy Bentham has given us in his *Deontology* on the uses to which we may turn the reflections of our stray moments is more in accordance with the social system of our nation and our times than that of the Cambrian sage; he reminds us of "the power of will" we have over our thoughts and words, simply counselling us always to give a pleasant direction to them, being apparently of the same mind as Dr. Johnson, who considered "the habit of looking at the best side of things worth more than a thousand a year."

Jeremy doesn't tell us what use to make of our time when it is thrown on our hands during our omnibus-journeys, because—poor fellow!—he knew nothing of this modern accommodation, but he calls our attention to those hours of the day and night when we are either waiting for other people, or walking abroad, or resting at home, or lying awake; and, as during these, he says, "the mind cannot be vacant, it behoves us to beware that the thoughts which occupy it are not useless or pernicious, but are so directed as to promote the happiness of ourselves and others."

DE OMNIBUS REBUS.

—♦—
"Hominem, pagina nostra sapit."—MARTIAL.

CHAPTER I.

The nomenclature of the omnibus—Its utility—London street-traffic—Overpopulation—Causes which might diminish it—Adulterated food and clothing, &c.—Hand-made bread—The consequences of witnessing the operation—Observations that can be taken in omnibuses—Conversation between two septuagenarian passengers—The subjectivity of human age—Longevity—Conditions under which it is or is not attained—Two interesting illustrations—A character—The skeleton in the Englishman's cupboard—The London dust-hole system—A Parisian's horror at it—Garrulity—The policy of silence—No voice so sweet to the majority as their own.



H! education's a fine thing, and not to be considered too dearly paid for at eightpence in the pound, when we come to experience its results. I asked a schoolboy the other day what was the meaning of the first half-line of the tenth

satire of Juvenal, "*Omnibus in terris.*" He replied with the most unhesitating alacrity, "We shall soon have omnibuses in all lands." If the youth was right, all I can say is that the remark is a very shrewd one on the part of the Roman satirist, who, if I remember rightly, confirms his prediction in another line of the same satire where he says "*Servus curru portatur eodem.*"

Classical, however, as may be this authority, and classical also the nomenclature under which the civilised world has agreed to recognise the popular vehicle, it is to be feared the omnibus has not altogether escaped the imputation of that vulgarity which is inseparable from things easy of acquisition, and made, as its name implies, indiscriminately accessible to all. Not that that matters much, for it is pretty clear that neither that vulgarity, nor its unpicturesque form, nor its necessarily conspicuous colour, nor its graceless movement, nor its uncouth equipment, nor even its hybrid character as an ambulant advertising medium, result in deterring the well-to-do, the well-dressed, nor even the "highly respectable" of both sexes from availing themselves of its cheap and convenient services.

The omnibus has, indeed, become so indispensable an auxiliary in the detail of town-life, that, as we are being checked and jostled, hurried and impeded, terrified and stunned, in our course through the noisy, bustling London thoroughfares by the ceaseless succession of these rumbling caravans from foggy morn to splashy eve, we instinctively ask ourselves how our progenitors got on without them; at the same time, it is impossible not

to note the rate at which they have practically taken to themselves the command to increase and multiply and fill the earth, and not likewise to ask ourselves how our children are to get on *with* them.

It is inevitable but that some day soon we shall have to excavate a reticulation of underground channels of communication to accommodate the ever and ever augmenting concourse of wheels, unless a sensibly perceptible clearance of the superfluous population should intervene. This, however, is not at all impossible, seeing the protection and encouragement held out to the adulterators and poisoners of every article of food and clothing offered to the confiding and much-abused public, the powerful agency of typhoid milk, or the consumption of bread the dough of which has been manipulated or (*chi lo sa?*) podipulated by perhaps scarlet-fever convalescents in the peeling stage.

"How nasty! pray stop!" did you exclaim, gentle reader? (Readers are always "gentle," however irate.)

But, my dear fellow! or my dear madam! I reply, this kind of bread you surely know is the predilected of our very fastidious nation, and that there is but a small minority that avails itself of the machine-made loaf, against which, strange to say, in these purist times there exists an unaccountable prejudice. The manufacture of "aerated bread" evinces a step in the right direction, and perhaps one day it will be accepted by the British public generally in favour of its cleanness. I once penetrated into the kneading-department of a large bakery, which turned out the most delicate (looking)

loaves. So deliciously tempting were they in appearance, that I thought it would be a pleasure to witness their fabrication. Alas! and alas!! this *was* a case where ignorance was bliss, and I cursed my fatal curiosity. The sight I gazed on there was one never to be forgotten; I think of it even now with a shudder, and for months after the first surprised impression I could not bring myself to look a loaf in the face. I literally hobbled on, dispensing with the staff of life; for it had become the broken reed which entered into my hand and pierced it, and I took refuge in rice, potatoes, biscuit (if machine-made), anything that had not undergone the unattractive process I had witnessed. It was in the winter season, but the baker's premises were heated to such a degree by his huge ovens that I can recall only one place that



I can imagine to be hotter (in this world, I mean, of course), viz., a sugar-refinery I once visited in Hungary, and on entering which I very nearly fainted. Well, there were huge deep troughs along three sides of this large, lofty, stone-floored - kneading-room, and in front of

each trough stood four or five powerful fellows stripped to the waist, each with a pipe in his mouth and a spittoon

by his side, but working with so much good-will, that they were not only earning their own bread in the sweat of their brow, but were liberally watering the bread of the customers with that of the rest of their frame. Poor devils!—I mean all parties concerned, but more especially these conscientiously laborious creatures, who were so uncomfortably situated they couldn't even take out a pocket-handkerchief when they needed one, but were obliged to have recourse to the uncomfortable expedient of employing in its place the back of their dough-encumbered hand, which they immediately with true conscientiousness returned to the trough. Of the atmosphere in which all this took place, charged as it was with human steam and tobacco-smoke, perhaps it is needless to speak further. I only know I went home devoutly wishing that my studies had been turned rather to science than to literature, and that I had time and genius to invent any kind of machinery which could be made to replace the human bread-maker. But this has become a superannuated wish, for machined bread in great perfection now exists, and those who prefer it without the seasoning I have reminded them of have no longer cause for complaint.

To return to our subject. I may say I know as much of omnibuses as a man who all but lives in them can be expected to have learned. Omnibus life has become a study to me, and, moreover, it seems always to lead to some other study. Not an omnibus lift do I take but adds in some unexpected way to my store of practical knowledge; not one but suggests matter for reflection,

which I think out then and there if the opportunity serves, or lay by for more convenient leisure if it does not, so that of the fragments nothing is lost.

In short, I get a great deal more out of my omnibus than the mere drive, though even that is not to be despised at the price. I might almost say of omnibuses what the poet affirmed of gondolas—though the hearse-like hue and form of the latter gave to his lines a point and expressiveness not to be traced in the gaudy-coloured London vehicle—

“ Sometimes they hold a deal of fun,
Like mourning-coaches when the funeral’s done.”

One day I remember being much amused at the conversation of two rival septuagenarians, whose experience of life and how to prolong it was worth retaining. They had, it appeared, respectively attained to seventy-seven and seventy-nine years, and both were very proud of these patriarchal figures; but the superiority claimed by the owner of those two extra years left the more juvenile old man nowhere. I was sorry for him, because I could see he felt his shortcoming in all its humiliation. He had looked round him with such a self-conscious air as he had stated the number of his years in a voice intended for the enlightenment of the whole company, and there was something pathetic in the mortification expressed in his wrinkled old face when the other came pitilessly down upon him and capped it with the additional two! I would gladly have helped him with two of my own years, had there been any means of getting at them and convey-

ing them, for he would have been as heartily welcome as obviously grateful. However, as it was, all I could do for him was to remark in a consolatory tone, "Never mind; in two more years you'll be as old as he is!" But he only shook his old head despondently, and answered with, I thought, uncalled-for irritation—for I meant it well,—“No I shan't; when *I'm* seventy-nine *he'll* be eighty-one; he'll have got into another decade! *Eighty-one!*” he repeated, as if that would be a result worth living for; and he said it spitefully, too.

However, absurd as it may seem, I can't say I was surprised, for I have often observed the subjectivity of human views in the matter of age, and it begins early in life. Up to twenty, all of us (young ladies especially) wish to be thought older than we are; after that period we (and especially they) try to pass ourselves off for younger, contriving, whenever we can, to forget a year or two in our reckoning; but when we have reached seventy or thereabouts, and are on the threshold, as it were, of our second childhood, we are again proud of every year we can add on, and don't scruple to exaggerate their amount, which will partly account for the number of persons who claim to have completed their “first centenary,”—that fine, round period!

A poor woman, whose husband had just missed it by dying at ninety-nine, was more concerned at the loss of the prestige she would have enjoyed as the widow of a centenarian husband than at the loss of the husband himself. “Only to think!” the poor old soul would say as she applied the corner of her white apron to her eyes, “if

my Tom could but 'a lived them twelve months more, he'd 'a been a centoorion! O dear, O dear!"

I remember my own venerable father, who lived to be ninety, used to regard men of seventy as "boys." In fact, age is a matter about which every one seems to entertain the most arbitrary ideas, and some people (more especially ladies) are so touchy, that, however truthful in other matters, they will deceive even their physician should he question them on this delicate matter, or will inscribe themselves in a census paper as of some fancy age, which bears no proportion to the fact.

I once asked a young lady, whose small and childish stature made her look younger than I supposed she really was, "And how old are you, my dear?" She didn't hesitate an instant, but answered, rather sharply, "I don't wish to say, sir." I was taken quite aback, as I had merely put an idle question for the sake of saying something to the girl; but having mentally recalled the time of her father's death, which I remembered perfectly well, I found, though I had had no idea of it when I innocently spoke, that she must be well over twenty. But I think it is part of the religion of that family to keep their ages dark, for I once heard a lady ask that girl's aunt about her daughter's age, when she replied discreetly, as she drew herself up, with a vicious smile, "I *never* remember my children's ages." The inquirer looked rather foolish. A happier answer still was that of the lady who, when asked her age by an official, said, "Oh, I don't know, I'm sure; the same as everybody else's, I suppose."

But I have no intention of abandoning my two old men, whose conversation was rather informing.

"I shall be haity come next Michaelmas," said the elder, gloating over his advantage in a way I considered mean; "and I take it," he continued, "there's nothing like walking for prolonging life. I've walked all my life, and I walk still; and I fancy it 'ud be a mighty calkerlation the number of miles I've walked in my time: why——"

"But you uses busses now," grimly broke in the other old fellow, delighted to avail himself of the chance to snub his rival.

"I *ham* usin' one to-day, certingly" (indeed there was no denying it), replied the challenger, "but it is the hexception, for I don't 'old with cabs nor busses, no, nor hany sort o' ridin'."

"It saves shoe-leather," laconically observed the young septuagenarian.

"That's what folks say, but I don't 'old with that heither," answered he. "I'd 'eerd that said so hoften, that look 'ere what I did, for I was determined to find out: I bought a pair of good stout serviceable walking-shoes, and I give a guinea for 'em, and I kep 'em six months a' anging be'ind the door, and iling 'em every three days, and hevery mile I walked in them shoes, I set it down on a bit of paper; and one day when I found they'd begun to wear, I hadded it up, and I'd walked two 'undered miles; and then, I 'ad 'em soled, and that cost me three-and-nine; so now, if you've got a 'ed for figgers, you can make hout 'ow much shoe-leather I should 'a saved

if I'd gone in busses, to say nothing of the hexercise, which I say's worth hall the money."

"That's curous, I allow," replied the other. "I don't suppose as there's many men as 'ud 'a made such a matter-o-fact business of it; but I wish I'd kep that sort of account of the hours I've gained by gettin' up hearly in the morning, ay and 'elth too, while others was a steamin' in their beds. That air's *my* charter o' 'elth, and that's 'ow I've got to be seventy-seven—seventy-hait I might say, for I was born on Martinmas day, and that ain't only nine months off now."

"Nine months hoff!" retorted the older man, "why that's the best part of a year, that is; so if it comes to that, I may call *myself* haity now, for I only want hait months of that."



"Gentlemen," creaked out from the corner the shrill cracked voice of an old fellow no one seemed to have noticed before, "it isn't worth while to have any words over the matter. After all, what are you, either of you, beside *me*? I was eighty-four yesterday;" and he shut his mouth with a snap, as if quite sure no one present could beat that.

This seemed a clencher indeed, and set the whole company in a roar; but the seventy-nine man was of a determined character, and

wouldn't give in even now. So muttering in a nevertheless audible tone, "And you looks it too," he paid his fare and departed, followed by his more juvenile companion.

I remember a story of a smoker who, in order to defend his favourite practice, and to prove that it was in no way prejudicial to longevity, was wont to cite the example of his father, who, he said, had got to be seventy, though he smoked his pipe from morning till night.

"Ah, now thin!" broke in a Hibernian of the company, "and how d'ye know but that, if he hadn't smoked, he moightent have been eighty by this toime?"

Length of days was regarded by the Jews as a sign of Divine favour, while, on the other hand, the Pagan philosophers saw in early death a desideratum.

"Whom the gods love, die young, was said of yore,"

quotes Byron, and he adds bitterly, but alas! truly—

"And many deaths they do escape by this."

Sad indeed are those he proceeds to enumerate, and those who have lived long will recognise them; but that he should have possessed this experience before thirty-seven is sadder still.

We rarely hear the question of longevity discussed unless by those who have some pet theory to maintain on the subject, although it seems pretty certain that as yet no royal road has been discovered by which to arrive at it. Dr. Franklin published just a hundred years ago an essay to prove that early rising was the great secret

by which life could be prolonged, and encouraged his readers to adopt the practice, further enticing them by the assurance that, according to a calculation he had made, there would be effected in Paris alone an economy of four millions sterling per annum, if the light of heaven were used at one end of the day instead of that of a tallow-candle at the other. Perhaps that is why Sir John Sinclair called early rising "the golden rule for the attainment of health and long life," and persisted in asserting that all old people, when examined, have agreed upon this point, however widely their evidence may have differed in other particulars. Early rising, however, we fear, cannot be relied upon to make old men of us, any more than temperance, habitual abstemiousness, cold bathing, exercise, pure air, a healthy locality, simple diet, tranquillity of mind, or anything else that would seem *theoretically* to give us a better chance than if we neglected them; for it is a provoking fact that, although there certainly are a few exceptional cases of failure, a large proportion of habitual smokers, inveterate drinkers, reckless *roués* and rakes, wakeful students, hard-working *patres familias*, and wearily-plodding money-makers frequently attain a more than patriarchal age. Neither can we build any theory upon a country in preference to a city life, for we find persons reputed to have arrived at ninety and upwards who have passed their lives in the closest, dingiest, ill-drainedest, and worse ventilatedest courts and slums of large towns.

How little the generally supposed advantages of pure air and regular hours have to do with the matter, I can

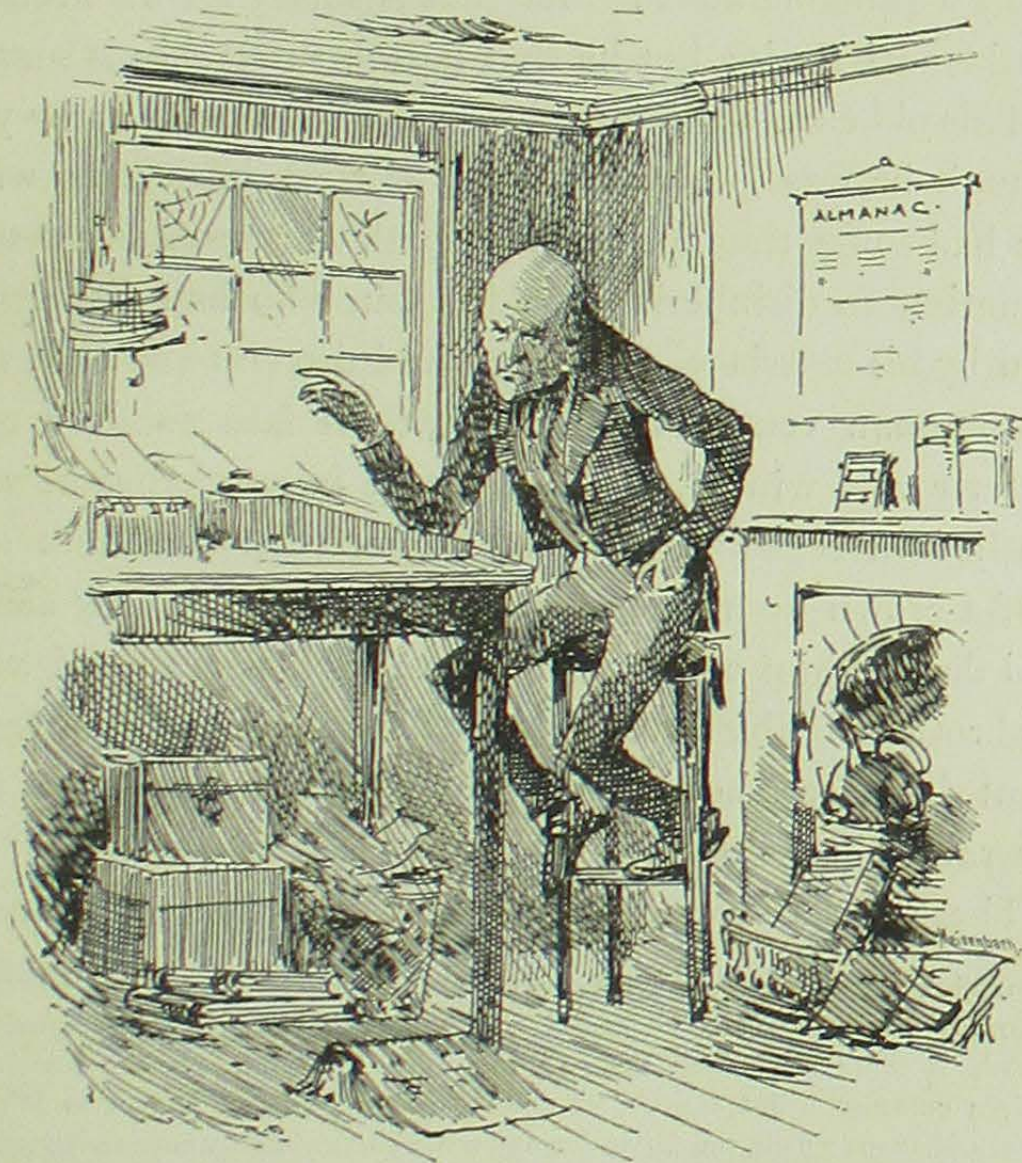
show you by citing, from among many I know of, two remarkable instances, one in Paris and the other in London. The former is that of the well-known and justly celebrated Oriental scholar M. Garcin de Tassy, a distinguished member of the *Institut de France*, whose acquaintance, nay, friendship, I am proud to say, I enjoyed for many years. This indefatigable student occupied, with very few intervals of change, all the year round (for he very rarely tore himself away from his well-stocked library and engrossing literary occupations)—a flat in the Rue St. André-des-Arts—the simplest way of telling you that his home had all the sanitary, or rather insanitary, defects for which that ill-constructed district of *le vieux Paris* is notorious. Drainage in the infant days of that venerable *quartier* made no part of scientific study, of domestic architecture, or of household economy; in this respect Paris had remained conservative in the teeth of all revolutions. This *quartier* was classic ground; many of its inhabitants were *savants*, and most of its shopkeepers *bouquinistes*, or publishers, or print-sellers. M. de Tassy, who was the impersonation of graceful and generous hospitality, received at his table, almost up to the day of his lamented death, the literary celebrities of the world; all that was famous in letters, science, and art courted his society and flocked to his genial and characteristic receptions. His spirits were gay, his conversation brilliant, and his intelligence keen to the last. Nor was his gallantry to the sex the least remarkable of his characteristics, for it was exercised to his latest day with the courtier-like grace and the deferential

politeness of the old school. All were surprised when, after his death, his age was announced as over ninety; for how he contrived to attain it under such singular disadvantages of locality, ventilation, drainage, and atmosphere, I have never been able to make out.

The counterpart (London) case is that of a little old lawyer, whose chambers were on the ground-floor of an obscure court, formerly known as Lyon's Inn, Strand, now long since pulled down to make way for the Globe Theatre. A dingier, gloomier abode on this side the Styx it would be difficult to find. It is, however, a fact that this old fellow, who lived over ninety years, literally was never known to sleep away from this dismal, dingy, dusty hole, to which his narrow prejudices seemed to chain him.

He was a "character" and no mistake, and funny stories were told about him; but my object in citing him here is merely to furnish another authentic instance that longevity is not incompatible with circumstances generally supposed not only to stunt the development of mind and body, but to bring the human subject to an early grave. As far as the stunting goes, nothing could have proved more effectual, but though warped physically, and I regret to say also morally, the little man remained as sturdy and wiry as if he had been a son of the forest or a denizen of the moor. For my own part, I think the secret of his health and longevity must have been his utter want of feeling, for it is certain he had no religion, nor yet affection even for his offspring. In one of the depressing, dimly-lighted rooms, the

besplashed and never-cleaned window of which was level with the pavement in Wych Street, lay piled up on the floor, which they half covered, a number of bundles of books he had from time to time collected, and on them an accumulation of dust which must have added



most prejudicially to the unwholesomeness of the air he breathed. Among these were no fewer than sixty Bibles, of which four were Breeches-bibles,* one a

* These several denominations of Bibles are at the present time more or less scarce. A "Breeches Bible" belongs to an edition in which it is written

"Treacle" (or more correctly "Triakle") Bible, one a "Vinegar," and one a "Wicked Bible."

Why he had burdened himself with the others I cannot say, but he had marked every one of them at Prov. xi. 15, and used to say that that one verse sufficed to make the Bible a valuable book: "He that is surety for his brother shall smart for it; but he that hateth suretyship is sure."

This old curmudgeon died worth £100,000, but, lawyer though he was (perhaps *because* he was), he left no will. He had some time before his death expressed his determination to disinherit his elder son, who had displeased him by his marriage. Starving and driven to despair, the young man ventured to knock at his father's door one bitterly cold winter night, and sent in word that he was clothed in rags and starving. The father sent him out half-a-crown by his younger son, who was his only clerk, and desired him on no account to exchange a word with his brother. The latter, finding his appeal had been vain, went back to the bridge-arch where he had slept for several nights, and cut his throat.

There was a legend to the effect that this unfortunate

(Gen. iii. 7), "They made themselves breeches of fig-leaves." A "Treacle Bible" is one where will be found (Jer. viii. 22), "Is there no triacle in Gilead, is there no fision there?" the word meaning, not the treacle of modern commerce, but *theriac*, or counter-poison, so well known to Mithridates, and anent which, the derivation and other particulars are copiously given in Bayle. The "Wicked Bible" is one that was published in the time of Charles II., and in which the word "not" was omitted in the Seventh Commandment. The "Vinegar Bible" takes its nomenclature from the printer's error of setting up a "g" instead of a "y" and omitting the final "d," so that ver. 7, chap. iv. of St. Matthew's Gospel reads, "Go ye also into the vinegar." A scarcer than any of these is the "Virago Bible," of which there exists a copy in the sacristy of Hereford Cathedral. *Vid.* Gen. chap. ii. v. 23, "She shall be called Virago."

son's ghost haunted the gloomy courts of Lyon's Inn at midnight, and might be heard chinking the ghost of two-and-six in the ghost of his ragged trousers-pocket. Maybe that is why the place was razed to the ground, but this is only my own supposition. If so, and its demolition has resulted in laying the ghost, it has not destroyed these uncanny memories, and is an additional proof that, whatever may become of their good deeds, the evil ones men do live after them. Anyway, the old father never, as far as his fellow-men knew, repented of his harshness, and remorse had nothing to do with his death, which was due to his forced removal from the ugly, unhealthy spot to which he had become rooted. He cursed and swore and protested, but in vain, against his transplantation; and finally, having no choice in the matter, transferred his penates, Bibles and all, to somewhat wholesomer premises in New Inn. But this advantageous change was of no advantage to him, for he did not survive the tearing up of all his old habits and associations, and died very shortly after, in the odour of sewer and other gases, leaving his accumulated six-and-eightpences to be fought over by the children of the suicide, the child of a daughter deceased, and his sole surviving son, now well stricken in years, whom he had trained to lick his hand with the servility, but not the affection, of a dog. This queer little chap, dwarfed and stunted like his father, was also a character in *his* way. He had passed a long life on a high stool covered with horse-hair, and very much worn, in front of a high mahogany desk fixed to the discoloured wall of a very dark, dingy little office, receiving its light and air from a very dirty window

opening into his father's consulting-room—a sort of “There I has him,” the curtain being on the wrong side—for him. No carpet was there to cover the bare deal boards, nor yet a fireplace, and a more cheerless den could scarcely be imagined. Here the poor wretch seemed to be eternally poring over papers, which he was as eternally copying, during the greater part of the day, with the help of a solitary tallow dip (tens) stuck in an old deep-panned tin candlestick, “one of the olden time.” He trotted about, whenever he climbed down from his stool, on two little bandy legs, and sported his father's cast-off wardrobe. When it was freezing hard, he would contrive to glide in behind the client it was his business to announce, slip up to the fire behind his father's chair, and try to thaw his poor numbed fingers. Sometimes he was clever enough to escape again without being discovered; generally, however, his father seemed to have an instinctive consciousness of his presence, when, without laying down his pen or taking his eyes off his paper, he would say very curtly, “Chawles!”—“Yes, sir,” he would reply with chattering teeth.—“What'r you doing there?”—“Oh, nothing, nothing sir.”—“Go back, then; I can't afford to have you doing nothing.”—“It's very cold, sir,” he would sometimes risk, but he must have been driven to extremities to take such a liberty. “Yes, it is, it's *very* cold; put on some more coals before you go.”

Charles, strange to say, remained meek and harmless in spite of his treatment, and I can even remember occasions when, being a small boy myself, while my father was closeted in the consulting-room with the old man, I

had been left on a chair in the clerk's room, he would develop a roguish twinkle and attempt a conversation, *sotto voce* of course, and looking at the window with a terrified expression all the time. He had never known any other kind of parental intercourse, and as Lyon's Inn was his world, and he had no chance of ever communicating with any one beyond it, he no doubt took for granted that all sons came into existence to be bullied by their fathers, to carry a pen behind one ear, and to perch on high stools with prickly seats, whenever they were not wanted to open the door or put coals on the fire.

A good deal of the money made in law also went in law—as dust to dust, so fees to fees; for although it is quite true that where there's a will there's a—lawyer, it is equally certain that where there's none the lawyers contrive to get good pickings out of the business; nor do they hesitate to pick even each *other's* pockets, so that we ask ourselves, surprised, “Is there then no honour among lawyers?” Perhaps they consider it is all in the family. However, on this occasion there was probably more than heirs, brought up as these had been, knew what to do with, for the management of money had certainly formed no part of their education; so the law-expenses did not hurt them much. On the contrary, such sudden reverses of fortune are often very prejudicial to those who experience them, and whose lives are frequently shortened thereby.

It would, of course, be impossible to eliminate from life all the causes that tend to shorten it, and it is equally futile to fidget over visionary schemes for prolonging it, though, if all the sanitary measures about

which we hear so much, and—what is worse—for which we pay so much, are really worth anything, we ought certainly to turn out a very long-lived nation. But alas! so inconsistent is human nature, and so illogical are our sapient vestries, boards, and municipalities in general, that we are mostly like the architect Swift tells us of, who cut a large door for the cats and a small one for the kittens. We make a tremendous to-do about abolishing one kind of mischief, and all the while leave unremedied a dozen others. Now what can possibly be more insanitary, or indeed more barbarous, than our fashionable London dust-hole system?

I have all my life through been vindictively conscious of this irrational abomination, but I don't think I ever fully realised the hardship of having to submit to it till I witnessed the disgust it occasioned to a Parisian friend of mine, who fell in with it for the first time in his life in my company. We had taken our places in an omnibus, and were driving up Portland Place, where he had been admiring the width of the street, the verdant opening at one end, the imposing hotel at the other, and the magnificence of the mansions which constitute it. The gorgeously liveried flunkeys, the elegant equipages, with their stylish occupants, had extorted his encomiums, when in the midst of it all, at about four o'clock on a bright afternoon in the middle of the season, came slowly rolling along a filthy, big, broad-wheeled cart, piled up with every imaginable horror, open to view, and not only to view, but to the wind, which wafted its lighter atoms along with the pestiferous odour they exhaled, into our faces, while one

of the two grimy fellows who accompanied it bawled out in a discordant bass his ominous "Dust—O." There was no door to our omnibus, and we occupied the two first seats, so that we received a very liberal share of the heterogeneous powder. "*Mais, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! vat is zat?*" exclaimed my friend, as, with an expression of disgust impossible to describe, he turned away his head to avoid the next puff, and looked in helpless horror on his broadcloth, defiled as it was with the polluting particles. "Ah, *mon cher ami*, that is one of the details of English civilisation, as it is called, which I must impart to you." And I proceeded to enlighten him as to the local arrangements enforced, and tolerated too, in our magnificent metropolis in this age of refinement—"yes," as the preacher said, "in this 'so-called' nineteenth century." I did my best to make it look all right, but it wouldn't do; there was no salving it over.

After I thought I had succeeded in getting him to believe it, he shrugged his shoulders as a Frenchman alone *can* shrug, and then exclaimed, "And you! you consent to zat? *Sapristi!* Why, *mon cher*, zere is not a so nasty practice in any capital of Europe; and you English, you pride yourselves zat you are clean! Ze French-man, ze Spanish-man, ze Belge and ozers, zey all sen' away zeir household *débris* each day; zey keep zem not one hour in ze house. But ze English-man he make one temple in his a-ré-a, and he keep zere his penates; he keep zem till ze whole neighbourhood can tell it by his nose!"

"Nay, nay," I said deprecatingly, "it is not so bad as that."

"How is it not so bad?" he rejoined with another rueful look at his coat. "You tell me all zis refuse is fetch away every two, tree weeks. *Weeks! Mon Dieu!* and all zat time you have your dust, your ashes, your cabbage-stalks, your orange-peel, your offal, your bones, your eggshells, and your drown-ed kittens festering in ze damp and heat, making one putrefying nest for ze blue-bottle and pestilenting ze atmosphère all round, an' you preserve tenderly and hug all zese nasty zings during *weeks* and——Only sink! when zey are take away and all zese 'orreurs are disturb, what a poison it muss be, like just now, to all who pass!"

I hung my head; it was all too true. I felt humiliated before this foreigner, whose reproof was fully justified. What indeed *can* be more revolting than to know that all that seething corruption is lying there day and night, harboured beneath our roof, reeking under our noses, and that in every street each house contributes to the pollution of the only air we get to breathe, its own individual decomposing mass? what should we think of the aggregate contents of these cupboards (each of which may truly be said to contain the special skeleton of that house) if we were to see them all piled up together?

How is it indeed, as my Parisian friend observed, that we submit to it, and why don't we insist on the plan pursued in Edinburgh, if we are too proud to copy foreign capitals? Still *fas est et ab hoste doceri*, and for all we in our self-consciousness look down on Spaniards and call them dirty, we should do well to study the simple plan adopted by the Madrileños with perfectly successful results.

What the "Vestries" gain by the present uncivilised system forced upon Londoners it might be interesting to investigate ; but the fact that they are so touchy upon the point, and so terrorised by the simplest hint that it is high time it were done away, that their tenacity is, to say the least, suspicious. *Crede me experto*. I have had occasion to visit the court-house of my parish when the removal of the "dust" (what an innocent name for it !) has become more than imperative, and have found all the officials as "cheeky" as you please ; but drop one word as to the reform of the present order of things, threaten to work it out in letters to the papers, and otherwise exhibit a determined spirit, it is like the red rag to the bull ; their whole nature is changed ; they obsequiously promise the most punctual attention, and all goes on with oiled wheels for perhaps several months, when the same process must be resorted to.

It is odious, but until our legislators take the matter in hand, like the smoke nuisance equally easy to remove, the annoyance must be tolerated. One day they will perhaps find that what *can't* be endured *must* be cured.

But, bless me ! I do believe I have been gossiping away, wandering and digressing hither and thither, running aside from the main road, and forgetting that I had better, once for all, ask you to excuse this weakness.

I am sadly afraid that, with advancing years, I have contracted the garrulity of age, and garrulity is an undoubted mistake : there is often great wisdom in reticence.

"Le silence est l'esprit des sots,"

which is rather paradoxical, as the moment a man knows he's a fool, he ceases to be one; and if he didn't know it, he wouldn't adopt silence to conceal his want of wisdom.

A *good* talker, who has good things to say and a good way of saying them, is an acquisition in any society; but, far beyond and beyond him in popularity will always be that *rara avis* a *good listener*. Be sure, wherever you go, you will always find people who would rather hear themselves talk than any one else, and if they can only find a listener, they are delighted with him as well as with themselves.

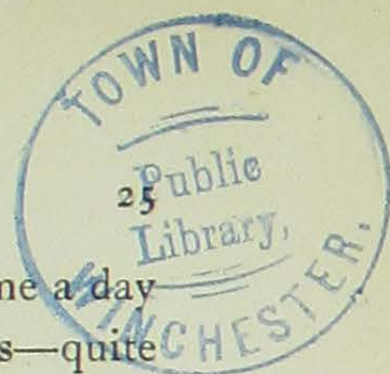


“What a charming woman Lady Smythe is!” said a lady once to me, “so full of information, so witty, so bright. Time passes so quickly in her company, one is always betrayed into paying her too long a visit.”

“She is indeed,” I replied. “And what has she been telling you this morning that has interested you so much?”

The lady paused. “Let me see,” she answered. “Oh yes, to be sure; we talked about Italy and the climate, and Venice and Naples and Rome, and the delightful *après-midis* there, and——”

A CONVERSATIONAL RUSE.



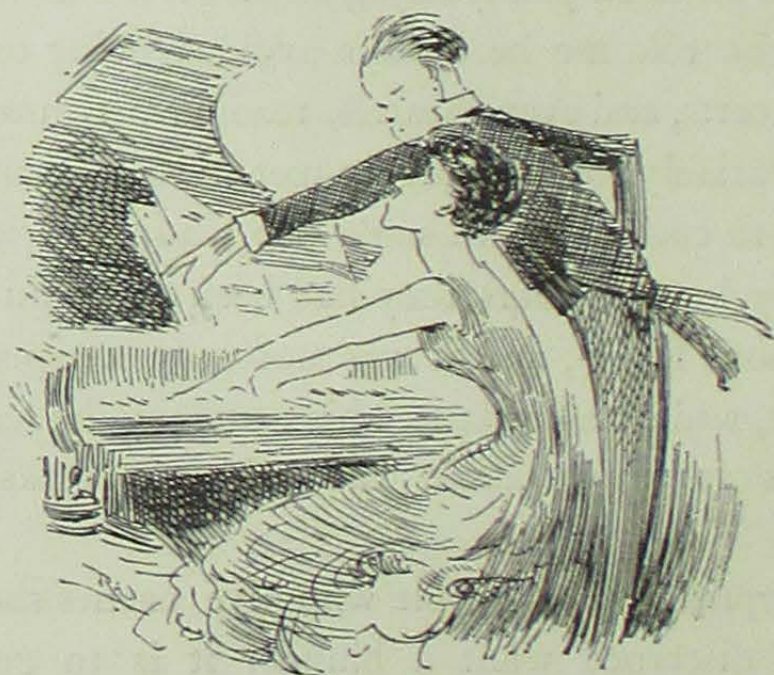
"Dear me!" I said, "that's strange. She told me a day or two ago she had never been farther than Paris—quite a phenomenon you know in these days, where you find yourself at the *table d'hôte* with your grocer on one side and your cheesemonger on the other."

"Well, I *don't* know how that can be, I'm sure," she answered. "I know that all the time I was there we talked of nothing but the Sunny South, and I came away fascinated."

I needn't explain to my intelligent reader the secret of this fascination: it recalled, moreover, a conversation of many years ago with a shrewd Scotchman (editor of the *Morning Post* in its palmy days), also a most "fascinating" person, who told me he always avoided going to exhibitions, concerts, and even theatres, reading new novels, &c., for he invariably found those he met in society more than delighted to converse with some one who was ignorant of things *they* knew (things they had been to see on purpose to talk about them), and it was not only a repose to be silent, but, while he enchanted his company, he learned all there was to know about the subjects of fashionable chit-chat.

It is surprising that people who give parties should not yet have discerned what a blunder it is to go to the expense of hiring singers and strummers and reciters to amuse them. Why, bless you! they are ten times better entertained with the sound of their own voices than they would be with that of a Grisi or a Malibran, if such artists existed now. It is true we have no "artists," or next to none, in this age of mediocrity, where, if there

is no talent that can be called excellent, there is also little absolutely bad, for all art, like all else, seems to have come to a dead level; we can therefore scarcely be surprised that audiences cannot be brought to listen in silence to the average run of performers; but this propensity to say their say under whatever circumstances is a sufficient indication of the proclivities of the age.



CHAPTER II.

I introduce myself in an un-Irish fashion—I introduce the carriage and pair of the people—What should its plural be?—The advantages it offers—Things lost and things found in omnibuses—Purses—Umbrellas—Something about these—The art of lending them—The lending sovereign—I find a florin—A *portemonnaie*—Its pathetic little history—A yet more interesting find—I appropriate its contents and offer them to the reader—Provençal language and literature—The “*Félibres*”—A Provençal tale—Omnibus intruders—Flies, &c.—Insect assassination—Trespassers—A tale of a trespass—The Irishman’s pig—The two Welshmen’s pigs—Trespassers punished.

PERHAPS all this time you are wondering what sort of an old fellow I am, and what business I have to be talking to you in this confidential style; so in justice to all parties I will go no farther without introducing myself.

I don’t altogether care to go to work after the fashion of the Irishman, who ingeniously began by introducing his “friend,” in order that there “moight be an acquaintance of the host to introduce *him*.” I prefer going direct to my indulgent reader and telling him who and what I am; though, alas! *now* I am only a —— no, stay. On second thoughts, it is perhaps more to the purpose to say—without even the retrogressive allusion to the “poor but honest parents” to whom I can lay no claim, but who figure in the first paragraph of so many biographies—without even any detail of my professional or class denomination, that I follow an avocation which obliges me to be much

on the tramp ; but though I fully admit it brings me in a profit—yea, more than a profit—it does not admit of my indulging in an unlimited choice of vehicles. I must therefore meekly—why not boldly?—confess that I am compelled by the tyranny of "Circumstance" (that unspiritual god who rules our destinies, however fondly we may believe ourselves masters of our acts, and therefore of our fate) to have recourse to the carriage and pair of the people ;—that carriage the horses of which are never ill, or, if they are, never venture to say anything about it ; the coachman of which may be out of temper, but never lets *you* find it out ; the footman of which is always at the door to help you in or out ;—that modern locomotive luxury which for a small and easily attainable cost is offered freely,—*omnibus*.

In these erudite School-Board days (for the freaks of which we hapless ratepayers are fined so recklessly) it ought to be needless to remark that I have here employed the word in its honest dative plural, using it, for once, in its legitimate sense, so thoughtlessly perverted in the mouths of the pre-School-Board million till conventionalised into a nominative singular, with an improvised plural of its own, after a most unorthodox fashion. That the Shakespearian* word "buss" should make busses is right and proper, though when these are very much pluralised it is *not* always right and proper ; but omnibus with one "s" should clearly make "buses" in the plural. However, this is a mere passing remark on philological a-buses.

* *Vide* "King John," act iii. sc. 4 ; "Coriolanus," act iii. sc. 2 ; "Triol.," act iv. sc. 5.

Now it may or may not have occurred to folks in general, especially to those who, blessed with a spare threepence, twopence, or even penny, nowadays, can treat themselves to a ride, that there is more, far more than meets the eye in this mode of transport. I don't mean the more obvious advantages of economising one's garments, avoiding dust in fair, and mud in wet weather—(worth considering when one doesn't keep a gentleman's gentleman)—and the saving of time—that time which is money. All this recommends the omnibus to the logical and the careful; but I have to add that, to the thoughtful mind, which sees sermons in stones,* &c., there is valuable matter for observation, reflection, and instruction to be found in every omnibus-journey—ever new experiences and lessons of life in its many varieties.

There are indeed many other things that might be found there—some desirable, some the reverse; and there are many things that might be, and that are, lost there—a purse, for example; and, paradoxical as it may seem to say so, there always seem to be more of these lost than found. That fact is, however, capable of explanation; there are so many ways of “losing” things, and also so many things that are always being lost. What say you to that exhaustless source of puns and riddles, an umbrella. The fate and fortunes of an umbrella, however, depend much on its condition. There are umbrellas we wouldn't pick up if we found them, twin brothers to those we

* I forget who it was remarked, apropos of the passage from which I quote, that it was quite clear Shakespeare's head was in a confused state when he wrote it, and that he must have meant “sermons in books and stones in the running brooks.”

couldn't lose if we tried—some honest person would be sure to run after us with them. Still these are not to be despised; they are especially valuable for lending purposes; for, as they would certainly be returned, we could afford to repeat that neighbourly civility again and again. It is written that the rain falls alike on the just and the unjust, but I have heard it shrewdly remarked that the just probably get more than their share of it, as the chances are that the unjust have borrowed their umbrellas. A "lending-umbrella" would, therefore, be a piece of by no means superfluous furniture in a well-regulated establishment. I have heard of a gentleman who carried a "lending-sovereign" in his waistcoat-pocket; but he didn't carry it long; for after the first lending he neither saw *it* nor the "friend" who borrowed it, again. Still it always served him for an answer to other "friends" who came to "borrow." "Oh, certainly; my lending-sovereign is out just now; you shall have it as soon as it comes in." He wasn't such a fool, that man, for the sovereign had already rendered him an essential service in getting rid of the "friend" who had the first loan of it.

To return for a moment to umbrellas. I was going to say I hardly know any article among a man's (or woman's) belongings that more readily helps you to get at his (or her) character, and I think, if I ever choose a wife, it should be by that crucial test; its expression, if I may use the word, is the reflex of its owner's personality. We can't help feeling that the possessor of a discoloured green gingham, with a pale yellow border, the ribs bulging, the points all at loggerheads with each other, tied round

the waist with a piece of string, something after the "Paul Pry" type, must be of a different character from the bearer of a neat, trim, bright silk one, so accurately wound round the stick, it might almost pass for a cane, and buttoned with such precision that you can hardly detect it *has* a waist. The stick of an umbrella, and notably the handle—oh yes, the handle—the "figure-head," if I may so call it, has likewise its story to tell, and tells it very intelligibly. Not that the people who carry umbrellas design these handles, but they select them, and very often after their own image. There is the plain, sensible, straightforward, hooked handle, useful to lean upon, handy to hold, convenient to hang up; nothing whimsical or capricious about it. The man who chooses that, knows the serious side of life; he has a calling or a business to attend to, and doesn't want to be bothered with any needless preoccupations; he buys an umbrella simply to keep his hat and coat, and perhaps also himself, dry; he doesn't go in for taste and fashion, and he is not particular, so that the stick and handle of his umbrella are in one piece and the hook a strong and tenacious one.

The varieties in umbrella-handles nowadays are endless—endless as the human types who purchase them: *il y en a pour tous les goûts*. The subject is one that has become too vast for discussion; nevertheless, to treat it broadly, we may recognise the sour, crabbed, prim, and highly-proper female proprietress of that umbrella the severity of whose handle testifies to its congeniality with the hand that holds it, just as we know at first sight

the jolly, genial, open-hearted old fellow who grasps that large, smooth, ivory knob, without a crease or a crevice in its clear, round, honest, bald surface : no *arrière pensée*, no double-dealing there. As for the emblematical figures, horse-shoes, animals' heads, and grotesque caricatures, I don't care so much about them ; they don't seem to make any revelations ; their object is too palpable to leave room for supposing them to have been selected by an



unconscious instinct which suggested their analogy ; while those extravagant devices of colossal rings, huge twists and twirls, knots and branches, elaborately rough, &c., are generally palmed off by the clever patter of the shopkeeper on vacillating purchasers, who, being devoid of either taste or judgment, are only too glad to act upon that of any one else, even though it be the plausible vendor himself.

To enumerate the objects that not only might be, but

have been, found travelling by themselves on the floors and cushions of omnibuses, and even in the straw that occasionally lines them, would be to recite those advertised announcements periodically issued from the office for lost property in Scotland Yard; and to the credit of the conductors let it be recorded that many—very many carelessly lost articles do find their way to that heterogeneous receptacle. Neither do they appear to be very keen in their gleanings, my experience being that they frequently overlook both larger and smaller droppings. I know I have more than once picked up stray articles left in omnibuses, and have thought some of them very suggestive: even a florin I found under my feet one day set me a thinking. Of course it might have been carelessly dropped from the purse of a rich man, or the seal-skin reticule of a well-off lady; it might have slipped through the hole of a schoolboy's pocket—the tip of an uncle or godfather, which the boy was probably much better without, since no doubt its intended destination was the tuck-shop. Serve him right, therefore, the young rascal! Why *had* he that hole in his pocket? At the same time its loss may, with equal verisimilitude, have been a matter of more than mere indifference to the loser, perhaps of serious inconvenience; it may have represented the day's board of a mechanic or an artisan—I mean one of the humbler class, who *don't* indulge in “duck and green peas” the first day they are in season, though I admit it is difficult to find such now that the British workman is “educated.” However, whatever its antecedents, there *was* the florin; though prompting all these

conjectures, it was a fact itself, and had to be dealt with as such; so I handed it to the conductor, intimating *pro formâ* the course it was his prescribed duty to follow, and leaving the execution of that duty to be settled between his conscience and Scotland Yard.

Another of my omnibus *trouvailles* was a *porte-monnaie*; not a fat, well-fed, bulky one, gorgeous in crocodile-skin and gilt metal, opulently padded with bank-notes and redundant with glittering coins. Alas, no! Thin and poor it was; a shabby shapeless little thing, hungrily flat and very light to the touch; wrinkles and cares and sorrows were written on its worn, collapsed leather sides; the frame was blackened and dim, and its clasp, or what once had been a clasp, never again to close with that once pert self-asserting snap, barely held it together. I own my curiosity to scrutinise the contents, and should certainly have looked in, even if it had not invited my attention by opening its mouth spontaneously, and then it poured forth its little story; for it had an obvious history, that little purse, and, albeit in hushed silence, told it innocently and pathetically. The tale it related was in three chapters, for it had three little pockets. In the first was a worn threepenny-bit with a hole through it, and twopence three farthings in copper—fivepence three farthings in all; and the little silver piece with that tell-tale ear-mark on it, might that count as specie, or was it reserved as a relic—a love-token perhaps, or a coin kept for “luck” (which had apparently maintained its distance all the same), or the surviving treasure of a child that was gone? I ultimately arrived at this last conclusion. The next division

contained a much-rubbed and cornered pawn-ticket, revealing that the paltry sum of sevenpence had been borrowed on a child's flannel petticoat, pledged in the name of "Musgrave." That, of course, was all nonsense, and "Musgrave" probably masked some Scroggins or Noggins. Yet what a romance might there not be epitomised in that much-worn bit of pasteboard! What was the detail of the downward course that led some unhappy wife and mother to "put away" her child's "bit of clothing," and what sort of a petticoat could it have been on which only sevenpence could be raised? The weather was bitterly cold, I remember, and yet the petticoat had not been recovered; indeed, when I looked at the date, I saw the day of redemption was already past for that petticoat; and how was the little owner faring without it on such a day as this?

Where was that miserable sevenpence now, for the sake of which that wretched child had bared its starved form and caught, if not its death, probably some life-long infirmity? What debt did it go to pay, what purchase to acquire? I felt very little doubt but that it found its way straight into the till of the gin-shop at the corner, where so many more as ill-to-be-spared necessities had already been expended. I opened the third and last chapter of this doleful but how oft-told story! What was there, there? A photograph—a cheap, faded, slummy-looking photograph, *carte-de-visite* size: that, too, was worn and rubbed and dirty, as if it had long been carried in the pocket. It bore no name nor indication of whom the group represented, for it was a group: the photo-

grapher's name and address in Seven Dials alone afforded a hazy but possible clue to the individuals whose outer semblance he had fixed on that stained and disfigured card, probably some years before. There they were still, nevertheless; a woman of the people—a nursing mother with her babe upon her knee; a man, apparently a mechanic, bending over her shoulder to look at the infant wonder of his fireside. Was this the child of their pledged affection, later on to be the child of the pledged flannel petticoat? At *that* moment he would probably have sold his own flannel-jacket to buy her a toy. A few, a very few years, and, counselled by the demon of drink, he tears the clothes off her poor little limbs to indulge his coarse, greedy appetite for drink. And so I put my charade together: my first, I had now no longer any doubt, was the touching little relic of the child, starved to death by the father's selfish sensuality; my second, the silent but eloquent evidence of the misery to which this absorbing passion had gradually reduced the wife who had believed in him, and the child who had never asked him for her life; my third, the presumptive proof of the accuracy of all these conjectures. When I had got thus far, I began to feel tolerably well satisfied with my sagacity; then I started on a fresh tack, and wove out another and yet another romance; and, lastly, touched by the very paltriness and utter want of intrinsic value of the little object, I vexed myself over the impossibility of finding, and restoring it to, the owner, picturing to myself the grief she (or perhaps he) might experience on becoming aware of the loss. “But what the dickens is

the use of this wasted sympathy?" said I finally to myself. "I can't discover the sufferer, though of course she's somewhere: I can't remove her grief: I'm not the redresser of fortuitous wrongs—if any wrongs can correctly be called fortuitous—and I'm not responsible for the miseries that drop from the sky on those on whom existence has been inflicted apart from their consent or choice." I rather think I got irritated when I reached this point, feeling the force of it sympathetically. At all events, I won't repeat any more of the thoughts into which I divagated on that occasion; I prefer to close the chapter and start afresh.

I have to mention another curious find I once fell upon in an omnibus, and must allow that I temporarily—oh yes, only temporarily, I assure you—appropriated it to my own use; but you will cease to reprehend that act when I explain that, although I rifled it of its contents and made them my own, I no more wronged nor robbed the owner than you yourself rob the man from whom you beg, borrow, or steal a little fire for your cigar. To explain: This object (which I honestly deposited at the office *ad hoc*, as soon as I had done with it) was a little torn, worn, apparently much-read book, covered in paper, which had been patched and mended, and detrimentally curled and rubbed at the corners after a fashion usually termed "dog's-eared." It was so dirty that I hardly liked to pick it up, but I did, all the same. It proved to be nothing more nor less than an old thirty-centime Provençal almanac, an *Armana Provençao*, and it was, as are most French almanacs, padded with a number of shorter or longer,

more or less amusing, stories; but on opening it, I found it to be not in French, but in what is, I can't think why, contemptuously styled *Provençal patois*, which always fetches me. I have travelled much in that wild and beautiful but neglected province, and possessing when I went there a tolerable knowledge of French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin, I left aside its Saracenic expletives, and found I could understand it "indifferent well." These popular almanacs are published at Avignon, or perhaps Carpentras, by the Society of *Félibres*, an association of patriotic Provençaux, by way of aiding the efforts of the people to retain their soft and expressive language; and no doubt these moderately-priced publications do as much to maintain its use among the people as the charming works contributed to its more elevated literature, and chiefly to its poetry, by Roumieux, Roumanille, Bonaparte-Wyse, Paul Arène, Aubanel, Mistral, Vidal, the Marquis de Fare-Alais, and other graceful Provençal writers.

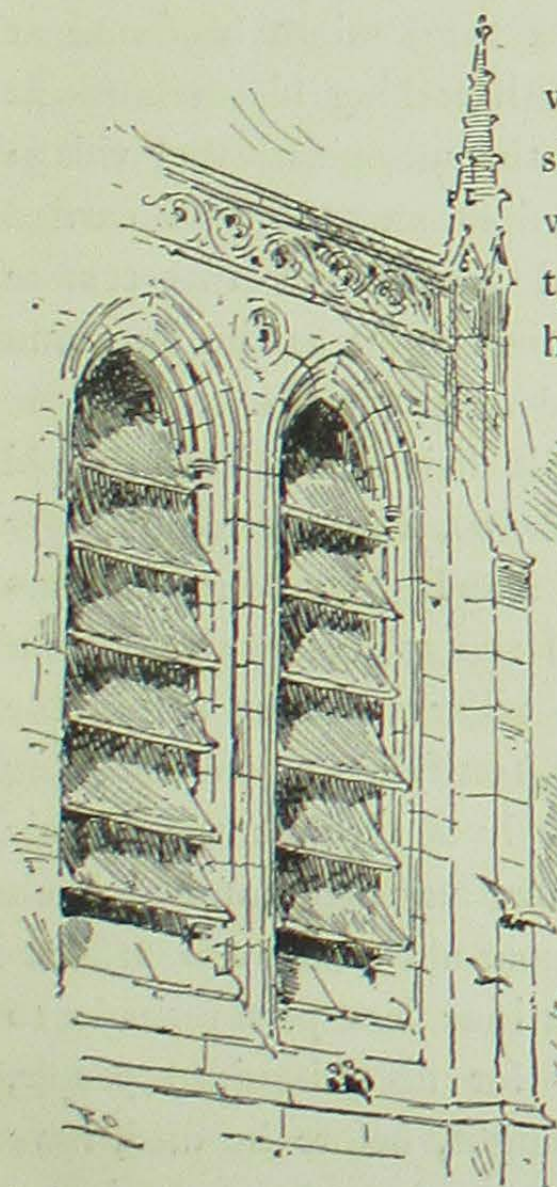
Well, I plunged into these crumpled pages, feeling as much at home with the compiler and his authors as if I had fallen in with a little band of that good, simple, hospitable population, towards whom I have always had such a kindly leaning.

When I came to one paper, entitled "A Provençal Legend," the *naïveté* of its drollery tickled me so much that I set to work and turned it into English. I found it eminently illustrative of the simplicity, the humour, and also the practical faith of the Provençal people, with whom religion is a part of everyday life, influencing their daily acts, not a solemn thing to be looked at grimly and fear-

fully from a distance, and only taken out and aired once a week, lest a too free and familiar handling should wear it out. Such as this little story is, I offer it to my readers, who may think, as I did, that that small shabby Provençal almanac was not such a bad find after all.

THE VICAR OF CUCUGNAN.

I.



Mons. l'Abbé Martin was vicar of a rural cure. This simple-hearted, zealous, and worthy old man was the very type of a village priest. His humble vicarage was a mere cottage, for his wants were few, and an elderly *gouvernante*, aided by the orphan boy who served as *enfant de cuer*, formed his modest establishment. His whole soul was in his parish, and he loved his Cucugnais with an affection altogether

paternal. To him his Cucugnan would have represented

an earthly paradise, could he but have felt that the piety of his flock responded to the labour and earnestness with which he fulfilled his pastoral duties. But, alas! in vain he preached, in vain he warned; vainly he threw open the doors of the old church at all hours of the day; in vain he pleaded for the souls of his truant people. These rebellious children of Cucugnan were bringing the white hairs of their spiritual father with sorrow to the grave! His exhortations were unheeded; one went to his farm, another to his merchandise, a third might be found at the village wine shop, a fourth staking his earnings at dominoes; in short, even in the unsophisticated village of Cucugnan, the world, the flesh, and the devil carried the day, and the unlettered peasants of this remote hamlet cared as little about their souls as the busy and fashionable denizens of a modern metropolis.

So it was that the birds built their nests within the old tower, and sang the praises of God, which were no longer echoed there by the voice of man! Moreover, the grass grew between the stones, and the spiders cynically spun their gossamer threads from pillar to pillar across the worm-eaten oak confessional, testifying, as the morning sun shone on their prismatic hues through the Gothic window, how long it was since any penitent had knelt there to be shriven. The poor old vicar was broken-hearted, but he did not continue less perseveringly to pour forth his daily orisons for his misguided people, entreating Heaven that he might, before he died, have the consolation of seeing them brought to a better mind.

II.

One Sunday, oppressed with these thoughts, he left the altar after reading the Gospel and ascended the pulpit to preach. He had framed a discourse which he hoped would touch the hearts of his audience, and, inspired by his zeal, he proceeded thus:—"My dear brethren," he said, "you know how much I have at heart the spiritual welfare of my flock. I assure you that the thought of it occupies me night and day. You will not be very much surprised, therefore, if I tell you that last night, as I fell asleep, reflecting upon the condition of my beloved parish, I dreamed a dream, which impressed me so deeply that I determined to relate it to you. I fancied myself—I, miserable sinner as I am—at the gates of Paradise. I knocked; St. Peter opened them.

"What, is it you, my worthy Abbé Martin?" said he, "What good wind blew you this way, and what can I do for your service?"

"Good St. Peter," I replied, "you who keep the great record and the key of Paradise, will you forgive my indiscretion if I beg you to tell me how many Cucugnanaïs there are within your territory?"

"I would on no account refuse your request, *Mossou lou cura*. Pray be seated, and we will go into the matter together;" and St. Peter took down his great ledger, opened it, put on his spectacles, and turned to the letter C. "Let's see! Cucugnan, you said," and he ran his holy finger down the page. "Cu—Cu—Cu—Cucugnan.

Here we are! Cucugnan! My dear Mossou Martin,' said the Saint, looking at me over his glasses, 'the page is perfectly blank! Not one soul. No more Cucugnanais in Heaven than there are fishbones in a turkey!'

"What! no one from Cucugnan here! no one! It cannot be. Pray, good St. Peter, look once more.'

"Useless, holy man; look yourself if you think I am mistaken.'

"But I, seized with terror, stood wringing my hands, and begging for mercy on those unhappy souls who, having left earth, had not found their way to heaven.

"Listen to me, Mossou l'Abbé,' said St. Peter. 'Don't take on in this way; you might throw yourself into a fit. After all, it is no fault of yours; there is no doubt your Cucugnanais are passing through the expiatory punishment of Purgatory, and will be here as soon as they deserve to be.'

"Then, of your charity, St. Peter, suffer me to go there, and let me at least see them and console them.'

"Willingly, my good friend. Here! tie on these sandals, for the road is rugged. Now walk on straight ahead for a long, long way, and then to the left. At the end of that road you will see a silver door studded with black crosses; you will knock, make use of my name, and you will be admitted. Adieu! take care of yourself.'

III.

"So I took leave of the Saint, and walked on and on. Oh, my brethren, what a journey! My flesh creeps when I think of it. A narrow path full of brambles, among which the hissing of serpents almost deafened me, conducted me to the silver door. I struck two blows: 'Pan, pan.'

"'Who knocks?' asked a hoarse and dolorous voice.

"'The Vicar of Cucugnan.'

"'Of——?'

"'Of Cucugnan.'

"'Ah! walk in.'

"I entered. A majestic angel, with wings as sombre as night, with a robe lustrous as day, with a key of adamant suspended from his waist, sat carefully making entries in a large book, much larger than the one kept by St. Peter.

"'I should be glad to know,' said he, raising his head as soon as he had finished the line, 'what brought you here, and what it is you want?'

"'Beautiful angel,' I said, 'I do not inquire from curiosity, but I am really anxious to know whether you have the Cucugnanaïs here.'

"'The what?'

"'The Cucugnanaïs, the people of Cucugnan; I ought to have said I am their pastor.'

"'Ah! the Abbé Martin, isn't it?'

"'At your service, gentle sir.'

IV.

“‘Cucugnan, you said?’ and he opened the book and turned over the pages, wetting his finger to make

them detach more easily. ‘Cucugnan!’ he said at last. ‘No, indeed; I can assure you, Abbé Martin, that we have no one from that place here.’

“‘What!’ I exclaimed, ‘none of my Cucugnanaïs in Purgatory! In the name of Heaven, where are they, then?’

“‘Well, holy man, we can only suppose they are in Paradise; where would you have them but there?’

“‘Ah! no, indeed; that is the dreadful part of the business. I have just come from Paradise, and not one—not one of them has ever been seen there! What shall I do? what shall I do?’



“That is a bad look-out, certainly. If they are neither in Paradise nor in Purgatory, there is, you know, but one conclusion; they *must* be in —.”

“Holy cross! ai! ai! ai! Is it possible! Could it be a fib of the great St. Peter’s? And yet I didn’t hear the cock crow! Ai! my poor dear parishioners! How can I ever go to Paradise myself if you are none of you to be there!”

“Take my advice, Mossou Martin. If you are determined at all hazards to make sure of your doubts, follow that path; it’s not a pleasant one; so run, if you can. You will find on your left a wide gateway; you will not be very well received, for they are a rough lot, but perhaps you can make them tell you what you want to know.’ And the angel showed me out.

V.

“It was a long broad path, paved with burning coals. I tottered as if I had been drinking; at every step I stumbled; I was frozen with fear, parched with heat, and felt dying with thirst; but for St. Peter’s sandals, I should never have accomplished that journey, for it was like walking on hot ploughshares.

“At length I saw on my left hand, exactly as the angel had described, a wide, wide gate, like the yawning mouth of a colossal oven. Oh! my dear brethren, what a spectacle that was! There there are no registers, and no ceremonies at the entrance: it is not even closed: there is no necessity for shutting it, for the streams of

hopeless souls pour in headlong ceaselessly day and night, just as you see deluded people following one another into the wineshops on a Sunday.

"I was swimming in perspiration and yet felt cold, for a shudder ran through me; my hair stood on end; the atmosphere was infected with a fetid odour of burning flesh; it was worse than Eloy the blacksmith's shop when he is shoeing an old ass! My respiration was almost suspended. I heard a horrid noise of mingled groans, screams, and oaths; but words are vain to depict the terrors of that scene; and yet I was only at the entrance, outside that dread abyss.



"'Now, old fellow, are you coming in or not?' said, in harsh and grating tones, a black and horned demon, poking me at the same time in the ribs with a red-hot fork.

"'I? No, thank you; I am not here on my own account; I am a friend of God.'

"At the holy name the dreadful imp hissed like a rattlesnake, and, making a spiteful grimace, he said—

"'Ah, I see! one of those cursed priests, the bitterest

foes we have ; but when we do catch one of you, don't we make him smart for the rest !' and he uttered an awful oath. 'Come,' resumed he, 'be off with you, or I'll be the one to make you run.'

" 'Not so fast ; I have had trouble enough to reach here, and I must get through the business I came for before I go back.'

" 'Speak out then, you ill-favoured crow,' replied he. 'I can't stand here all day while the rest are enjoying the fun.'

" 'Fun indeed ! You don't know that what is play to you is death to me. I stand here in mortal anxiety till I know whether—whether—dear me, I can hardly ask so fearful a question—whether among your population, by any chance, you happen to have *any one* from Cucugnan here ?'

" 'Fire and pitch, Sir Priest ! What do you mean by coming here to make game of us in this way ?' retorted the diabolical porter, furious. 'As if you didn't know better than that ;' and he stood taking me off. 'Why, you infernal hypocrite, *all* Cucugnan is here. Put your ugly nose in farther, and you will see how we settle their business here, your honest Cucugnanaïs.'

VI.

"I gathered all my courage, and looked in the direction indicated. Alas ! alas ! brethren, what did I behold in the very midst of a whirlwind of flames and smoke ! There was tall Coq-Galline—you knew him, all of

you—Coq-Galline, who was always getting drunk, and his wife Clairon, whose tongue used to set the village by the ears. There was Rouget the tanner, who used to cook his accounts and cheat all the simple folk who couldn't read or sum. There was Jonas Smoothface, who came so regularly to church, and watered all the milk he sold you. There was Tony Nimble-fingers, who made his oil with his neighbour's olives. There was Jeannette the charwoman, who never worked but when her employers were by. There was Antoine the farmer, who ground down his labourers to the lowest *sou*, and hoarded his money for his spendthrift heirs. There was Marchand the usurer, who took advantage of the misery of his borrowers; and Grosjean, who laughed at religion, and, whenever he met me, would put his thumb to his nose; and Rougebec the drunkard, and Fouille-trou the gambler, and Marthe, and Jacques, and——”

VII.

As the Vicar proceeded, he saw with inward satisfaction that he had succeeded in stirring the stolid hearts of his congregation. Groans and tears were heard on all sides as one saw his father, another his mother, one his sister, and another his brother reaping the disastrous fruits of their irreligious lives.

“You see, my dear brethren,” continued the preacher, “you see this cannot go on; the charge of your souls is committed to me, and I must save you, if I can. We must put all our affairs to rights at once, and I solemnly

invite you all to the table of the Lord this very next Sunday. To do things well, we must do them in order, and this very day I exhort you to begin your preparation; you can all come to me during the week. To-morrow, Monday, shall be for the old men and women; we will be indulgent with them. Tuesday, the children; that's soon done. Wednesday, the young men and maids; that will take a little longer. Thursday, the men; we will cut matters short. Friday, the women; I shall allow no gossip. Saturday I shall keep for the miller, and it won't be at all too much to give him to his own share. You see, brethren, when the corn is ripe it must be cut, when the wine is drawn it must be drank. We have dirty linen enough; the sooner we wash it, and wash it clean, the better. Wishing you all the grace of God to strengthen your new resolutions. Amen!"

VIII.

During the week all went on according to the good Vicar's wishes, and on Sunday the concourse at the altar was immense. Since the memorable sermon relating the Vicar's dream, the perfume of the virtues of Cucugnan has been perceived for miles round the once iniquitous spot now become a very Beulah; and not more than a year after, the good pastor dreamed a second dream, in which he saw himself at the head of a refulgent procession of white-robed saints, all Cucugnanaïs, with palms in their hands and crowns on their heads, singing a celestial *Te Deum* as they trod the starry road which leads to the New Jerusalem.

Of other omnibus-finds, there is a cold, which might easily be found if we manage to sit in a draught; or we might possibly find the measles; scarlet-fever I don't include, because for some time past that has only been caught from milk; indeed it might now almost be termed milk-fever. We might—but I assert we rarely do—find a small tormentor it would not be polite to mention more explicitly. Flies certainly do abound, and therefore why not less conspicuous insects? As to the flies—"wolves in sheep's clothing," as we are now taught to consider them—one is surprised at the audacity with which they disport themselves in small lively parties over the very pasteboard on which we see advertised in most legible characters "Mr. Morto-Insecto's Universal Fly-destroyer;" just like the human trespasser pursuing his forbidden inroads in spite, and under the very shadow, of "Steel traps and spring-guns." But human beings are not singular in this social sin. Even pigs will trespass sometimes, which reminds me of a humorous story, authentically true, or I would not offer it to you in illustration of this fact.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Evans were neighbours in two tenements not a hundred miles from Rhayader. As you probably know, pigs are not styed in the Principality, as in many other parts of Great Britain, and are consequently nice, clean, pink creatures, free and happy, and therefore good-natured, whom you may meet occasionally airing their pigskins in the lanes and roads, accosting you with a civil grunt as they trot on, with their snouts generally near the ground, their ears flapping over their eyes, and their tails coiled up in a neat little whirligig, not of

much use for the purposes for which tails might be supposed to be intended—in fact, they always suggest that a *chignon* would be a useful addition ; sometimes you may see them rolling about on the turf or in the garden, and frolicking with small children, who treat them much as others would treat a pet dog, though not with that extreme respect manifested by the Irishman, who with his family slept on a heap of rags, in order, as a matter of justice, to yield up the only mattress in the establishment to “ Miss Juliana Matilda the sow, because sure an isn’t it hersilf as pays the rint.”

It is true Mr. Evans’s pigs did not repose on mattresses, but they lived in a free country, and enjoyed all the privileges and liberties of the subject. [It sometimes puzzles me to hear England styled a “ free country,” because there are occasions every now and then when we can’t help seeing it is the most enslaved nation in the world ; but we will talk of that another time.] To resume : Evans’s pigs took a mean advantage of the almost parental indulgence with which they were treated, and starting off with their snouts snuffing the ground, their ears flapping over their winking, little pink eyes, and their tails curled—I should almost say needlessly—tight, sauntered into Jones’s flower-garden. This was trespassing and no mistake ; for I am sorry to say they so far forgot their manners and their principles as to tread down whatever happened to come in their way, and to root up everything they took a fancy to, regardless of its value. Luckily we were not in the days of the tulipomania, or they might have occasioned Jones as disastrous a loss as that which

befell the Dutch merchant-prince in Amsterdam, who being called upon during business hours by a country farmer, and having asked him to step into his counting-house and wait for him there, not only forgot him, but forgot that on a shelf close to his hand had been deposited a tulip bulb, the pride of his heart, being the intended nucleus of the huge fortune which was to enable him to retire from business. The poor farmer, after waiting some time, felt hungry, and just "*pour passer le tems*" (which I daresay you know is the only valid reason that ever could be found for the construction of the Thames Tunnel), took a piece of bread and cheese out of his pocket and proceeded to lunch. Finding the fare rather dry, he looked about, and seeing nothing within reach but still dryer account-books, which (cooked though they doubtless were) he had no inclination to swallow, he caught sight of the shelf, on which, to his infinite delight, lay what he unhesitatingly took to be an onion. For want of anything more relishing, he contented himself with that substitute; sliced it, and finding it, as he considered, a very tasteless and ill-flavoured one, he threw most of it away: by and by *mynheer* came back, and, after apologising for keeping his visitor waiting, learned that he had utilised the time by making the best dinner he could out of the contents of his pocket seasoned with an onion. "But," he added, "I'll send you some of *my* onions, and perhaps they would sell well here, for yours seem to me miserable things." I won't stop to describe the merchant's consternation; indeed, I'm not sure he didn't first open the farmer to see if his bulb could be rescued, and then in

despair cut his own throat ; and that makes so good an ending to the story, that I needn't trouble you with any other.

However, Evans's pigs didn't do anything so bad as that—I *will* say that for them ; still Jones was not pleased at their intrusion, and wrote to tell Evans that "if his piggs were found there again they would be prosecuted within an inch of their lives," or words to that effect. Evans thereupon took another sheet of paper—as it was a matter of business, they probably thought it safer to have all communications in writing, though they were next-door neighbours—on this clean sheet of paper he wrote as follows :—

"Mr. Jones may consider piggs with two 'g's' emphatic ; but Mr. Evans has to beg that in all future correspondence on this subject, Mr. Jones will be good enough to spell *his* pigs with *one* 'g.'

Signed "O. EVANS."

And "O 'eavens!" we may well re-echo on reading such a literary, not to say litter-y production. You will observe, dear reader, that not a word did he say about the trespass, which was very clever ; for though the pigs (with one "g") went in and out as usual, Jones had become clever too, and he took very good care to have *no* "future correspondence" on the subject. He went straight to work, and got it all settled by a J.P., much to Evans's disgust and his own contentment.

But, if you would like another pleasant story on trespassing, I can give you one as authentically true, concern-

ing the fowls of a Mr. Smith at Northborough, whose proclivities led them to pertinaciously frequent the stable-yard of a Mr. Thomas Catt—"Tom-Cat," as he was facetiously called by his neighbours,) though why his godfathers and his godmothers, in his baptism, were so thoughtless as to give him "Thomas" as a name, and not even the resource of a second, to separate it from his somewhat singular patronymic, I can't imagine.

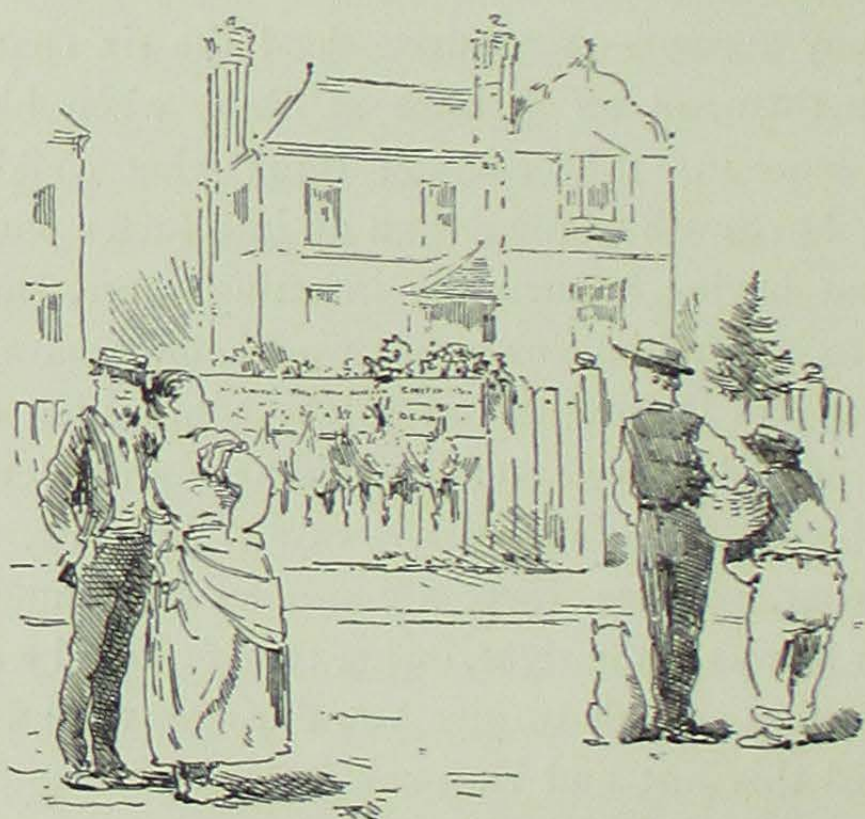
Mr. Thomas Catt remonstrated civilly for some time, but as Mr. Smith found that the expenses of his poultry-yard were considerably lightened by these visits of his sagacious fowls, like Eli he did not check them with that paternal authority which would have put a stop to such annoyances. At last Tom Catt, irritated by this pertinacity, adopted a different style, sent his "Compliments to Smith, and begged to inform him that he did not wish to do anything un-neighbourly, but that if Mr. Smith's birds came on to his premises again he would poison them." Smith thereupon began to take precautions, and shut up his feathered family; but so strong was the habit he had allowed them to acquire, that one day, the hen-house door having been left open, off they walked for a refreshing change to their favourite *quondam* haunt. The next day they hung their heads, walked about in a dejected way, drooped their feathers, crowed and clucked no more and, sad to relate, one by one they lay them down and died!—the most unprofitable lay Smith had ever experienced from them. Smith came home to find his poultry-yard like a battlefield strewn with the dead and dying. Of course his first words were, "That rascal

Tom Catt has done this ;” then he strode into his business-room, shut the door, sat down in his cherry-tree arm-chair in front of the knee-hole table, put his elbows on the ink-stained leather desk, plunged his head into his hands, and his hands into his hair, and began to ask himself how he should serve the man who had done this thing. He thought of all sorts of schemes, each one more desperate than the other, and had just settled he would buy a pistol—a revolver—load the six chambers, and fire them all off at once at Catt, when his wife luckily came in. She couldn’t think what could have happened to Smith to rough him up into such a phrenetic state, but having learned the irritating cause, she proceeded to butter him down. It would never have done, you know, to let him go on to the commission of the murder he had decided on : it would have prejudiced him—and herself too—in so many ways. “ Besides, really, Smith dear, you see, there are people weak enough to consider he was in the right, owing to that stupid warning he was astute enough to give you during several weeks,” remarked this just and reasonable woman. “ Still,” in true Christian spirit she added, “ it is quite fair we should have our revenge on him, but let it be done in a way that won’t tell against ourselves ; there are many modes far preferable to shooting him.”

What further conversation passed between the Smithian couple on this occasion was never known, but the result of the conjugal conference was that on the following morning a long, narrow board appeared along the frontage of Tom Catt’s garden, from which, side by side, in all the meek

helplessness of death, hung in state the lifeless victims of his wrath; above them had been painted in very large, conspicuous white letters on a black board, no one ever knew by whom, though most people guessed it:—

“These are the chickens of Theophilus Lucifer Smith, which Tom Catt *said* he would poison, and *behold they are dead.*”



This is a long digression, but I have not forgotten where the interruption began; and I return to Mr. Morto-Insecto's and other mortiferous advertisements lining the inner surface of the omnibus, to assure you that I never come upon one of them but I proceed to consider it from the point of view of the fellow-creatures—they *are* fellow-creatures, you know—against whom they conspire. I set myself wondering how they would

feel if they could suspect our treachery and overhear our cowardly plots. I one day bought, for very good reasons, a beetle-trap, on which was pasted "Directions for use." As I perused them, I tried to imagine myself for the nonce one of those black, shiny, many-legged, and, I admit, unlovely creatures.

"Bait the trap," coolly said the instructions, "with any kind of food or liquid that will attract them; beer is the best." (This was a broad hint at their being fellow-creatures, thought I.) "When the trap is full," it continued, "pour boiling water on them." This, in cold-blood! What must be the indignation of a School-Board beetle—able therefore to read—should he find this trap set for *him*? Wouldn't he think himself justified in condemning the heartless barbarity of his grand, magnificent, two-legged fellow-beings, who, capable of great and immortal deeds, can condescend to such mean and under-hand plots against defenceless creatures who humbly seek their hospitality, doing no harm, and content with the warmth of the kitchen-hearth and the refuse of the servants' table?

After all, we take their lives only by the *droit du plus fort*, and because in our arrogance and vanity we choose to assume that the world was made for man. Who knows it was not made for beetles? Who knows that man is not a mere accessory? Moreover, who knows whether there exist not, above us and beyond our limited ken, beings as much larger than ourselves as we are than the poor beetle that we tread upon, so that we are no more conscious of their existence than a beetle is of ours? To

them, therefore, man would be a puny, contemptible, unimportant little object, whose anatomy and habits they are perhaps at this hour studying by means of lenses of a magnifying power of which we have no idea, finding infinite amusement in our queer little ways, our ridiculous airs and absurd self-esteem, or our pugnacious and rapacious determination if we happen to fancy an island or a province, or anything else that another of us has got and wants to keep, and the corresponding ferocity with which he defends it.





The course of an omnibus journey—The incidents it comprises—Their instructiveness—Newspaper imps—Their characteristics—Their manœuvres—Other hawkers at omnibus-doors—Penny-toy vendors—Automatic toys—Squeakers—Almanacs—Their premature appearance—Anecdote of Dryden—The “Unemployed”—Beggars—Their dodges—The “British Workman”—The value of an adverb—The outside of the omnibus—The omnibus-horse—His past, present, and future—Physiology of the omnibus-horse—The omnibus-horse of Paris—Treatment of horses generally—Retributive justice—The bus-driver—Drivers of public vehicles generally—Of cabs—Of street vehicles in Paris—The antecedents of these latter—Unfrocked priests—An anecdote—A Fulham bus-driver on Bishop Blomfield—A characteristic altercation—The knife-board—Exterior advertisements—Various others, within—Ingenious advertising tricks—A hint for harmless swearing—*Argots* various—*La langue verte*—Abbreviations employed by conductors—“Safeties”—Other matches—Exaggerating advertisements—An anecdote—Soap—Portrait trade-marks—Courting babyhood—Advertisements on paper bags—Paris advertising cabs—Tables, &c.—Ingenious modes of catching customers—Inexplicable indifference to retaining them.

BUT I am just proposing to start on my daily omnibus journey through the Metropolis, threading its intricate and busy streets. I know that, accustomed as I am to keep my eyes and ears open and to observe, I shall have

within my reach traits of character, whether of our own or other nationalities, indications of class, details of life as interesting, as suggestive, and fully as entertaining, although (why not *because*?) taken from nature, as those artificial romances imagined by the needy scribbler in his miserable garret, from whom we acquire, instead of actualities, only the false views of his starved, morbid, and overwrought mind. Why, we have episodes of real—*very* real life, before we get inside the door! Look at those ragged young urchins fighting their way up to the step, on the chance of selling a “Hevenin’ Noose” or a “Heighth Hecho.” Breathlessly they try to secure a customer, each regardless of the others, each intent solely on doing a stroke of trade for himself. He shoves his goods through the door if he can, and holds them up to the window if there be no clearer opening for business. We may measure his eagerness by the expression of satisfaction if he succeed, or of disappointment if he fail to dispose of his ephemeral goods—an early practical training in the self-seeking policy of trade, the instinctive law of self-preservation: “Let *me* but sell *my* bundle, *ruat cœlum!*”

We look at these lads and note their pinched faces, their rent garments (with now and then patches of the buff revealed), and we remember with compunction how very little they must get out of that halfpenny which has so much to pay for before their share can be reached: how many individuals have to live out of it, how many items it goes to liquidate; and yet the minute fraction that enterprising young rascal can realise

by the sale of a single copy is a serious object to him. No doubt he

“Thinks of it by day and dreams of it by night,”

and hugs the thought of it as the lover hugs his mistress's *billet-doux*: and yet how many of these minute fractions must be collected into a coin that will purchase one loaf of bread! How vague and flicker-

ing are our notions of the way in which these young vagrants live!

We may have an undefined idea of the boy newspaper-hawker as a being 'omeless, 'ouseless, 'opeless, 'elpless, 'atless, and *h*-less generally, though not always artless; but there we are wont to leave him and to turn to some more congenial subject, under the very excusable conviction that it would be utterly vain to try to fathom the mystery of him, to

any practical purpose. We might lecture him, or counsel him, or give him tracts, or otherwise try to improve his moral condition; but the chances are it would be worse than useless, as, if he did not appreciate these cheap and unproductive attentions, he would probably resent them by making game of us, and reply with some spicy remark for which we should be quite unable to find an adequate repartee; and if, on the other hand, he meekly accepted our interference, we



might be tolerably sure we were making a hypocrite of him.

They are by no means wanting in a sense of humour, these newsboys, as we should find if we listened to their chaffing of each other, though they are scarcely so quick-witted as their French counterparts the *gamins de Paris*, who are equal to every occasion. One day when the papers were full of the Suez business, and the telegrams were announced in large letters on the posting-bills as they lay spread on the pavement weighted with stones after the usual fashion, an omnibus was driving up to the Regent Circus halting-place, regardless of everything but its own speed.

"Now then, guv'nor," called out one of these boys in deprecation of the coming invasion; "look where you're a-going. . . . There ye are! splash into the middle of the *sewage canal*!"

Once on a Saturday afternoon, a gentleman in the omnibus wanting to rid himself of the buzzing importunities of one of these boys, called out, "I don't want any of those; give me to-morrow's paper."—"Here ye har, sir," replied the quick little chap—"Sunday Hobserver."

I remember a similar story of a *gamin de Paris* (whether authentic or not I can't say) being asked by a customer who wanted to puzzle him, for "next Monday's *Figaro*." The young imp, who wasn't to be caught, answered promptly he was very sorry, but he had "sold them all last week."

Other descriptions of hawkers there are who besiege omnibus-doors, trying to turn an honest (or dishonest)

penny by the disposal of their wares. This kind of market, however, is very much localised, and except at certain periods of the year it is rare to meet beyond the E.C. district those vendors of penny, and even half-penny articles, the ingenuity and originality of which are scarcely more surprising than their cheapness. How they are got up, what is their *provenance*, and why they are offered at that paltry and apparently unremunerative price, it is difficult to understand. As a rule, the enterprising individuals who deal in them haunt the kerbstone and the gutter of most of the City thoroughfares, and seem to find a ready enough sale. It is a stretch of public spirit on their behalf that they should forward the purchaser's views by carrying them to him when seated in his omnibus. Among these clever toys, one of the cleverest I can recall might well on its original appearance deceive the very elect by its automatic voice and action, *i.e.*, when in the hands of a clever manipulator: automatic toys are a feature of the nineteenth century.

"Lor' bless ye, sir," said the master of a toy-shop once to me, "why, yer can't *sell* a toy now unless it can *do* something;" so it was no wonder the public took to this *penny* toy that *could* "do something." The only wonder was, that the trick by which it was made to seem to do it should have gone on so long (yea, and goes on still, apparently) without being found out. The power of face of the man who thus takes in the public was and is extremely remarkable. I remember once watching this individual, who had appropriated a certain portion of Oxford Street on either side of the Princess's Theatre, as he was exhibit-

ing the capabilities of his supposed automaton toy, vulgarly yclept a "Jack-in-the-box." As he touched the spring and the little fur-clad figure started up through the lid, he simultaneously and ventriloquistically uttered a cry which every individual in the crowd round him spontaneously attributed to the puppet. I noticed a



young woman, who had probably got a baby at home, after standing for some time and looking intently at the proceeding with an incredulous face, at last make up her mind to become possessed of one of these cheap wonders; she paid her penny, took the purchase, and pursued her way contentedly, till, moved by female curiosity to test its powers, her disappointment and dismay

were great at finding it was now utterly voiceless. After a little hesitation she retraced her steps; the salesman was still there with his tray of toys suspended before him from his neck, and holding one in each hand, by means of which he was still gravely attracting the astonished gaze of passers-by. So far from appearing disconcerted at the return of his customer, he went coolly forward to meet her.

"Won't squeak, miss?" said he; "then it's because you don't 'old it right;" and taking it from her hand he once more performed the trick. "Give you another instead? Cert'nly; you've only to take your choice, but this one's all right. Now *you* 'old it—there—like this," and with that he made her move the spring while *he* uttered the squeak. The young woman was perfectly satisfied, and so confiding, that this time she walked away, like Noah's dove, to return no more; but the ingenious rogue stood there and continued his iniquitous little trade with the most undisturbed equanimity. I should like to be able to record what were the young woman's feelings when she reached home; but that we shall never learn, though we might guess.

Views of London unfolding themselves in long narrow ribbon-like strips have I seen offered at the omnibus door, containing twenty-four pictures for one penny; picture-books, too, full of highly tinted illustrations; histories of England (very much abridged, and perhaps all the better for that) and illustrated sheets of natural history, somewhat over-coloured in every sense. Books purporting to be story-books, but in reality *réclames*,

advertisements for flashy shops, and sold to innocents at a penny each! This is a case in which it is the purchaser who is "sold," and reminds me of a very subtle remark of the late Cardinal Wiseman—that "it argues ill for the morality of a nation when the same word is employed to signify dealing commercially and cheating."

Almanacs, appearing very much in advance of the "noo year;" sometimes at the beginning of September; in fact, each year the next year's almanac appears a week or two earlier than before, so that one can't help wondering whether in time one will not come to receive next year's almanac on the 1st January of the previous year. As matters stand, there ceases to be any salt in the once-amusing French caricature which represented the flurried entrance of the "New Year" in the month of November, breathlessly exclaiming—" *Ah mon Dieu! on ne vous donne plus seulement le temps d'arriver.*"

Apropos of almanacs, I won't dismiss them without recording a good story I have heard of the poet Dryden, who was won't to be so much absorbed in his literary pursuits, that when his wife wanted to call his attention to any matter more interesting to herself than to him, she had the greatest difficulty in rousing his attention. One day, when more absent than usual, she remarked pettishly, "I wish I could turn myself into a book, perhaps then you would attend to me." "Do, my dear," he replied; "only let it be an almanac, and then I shall change you every year."

Beggars of late have abounded in our streets, em-

boldened by the successful results of the "unemployed" humbug, as if there wasn't in every house a heap of neglected repairs, which the owner reluctantly attends to himself, because he has such good reason to be afraid of that untrustworthy biped, the "British workman."

These beggars, who infest our streets, sometimes venture to attack the ingressing and egressing omnibus-passenger, but he is not so promising a speculation at that moment as when he has got away, and can be followed: then, of course, the tormentor can measure his pace, creep when he creeps, trot when he trots, cross when he crosses, rehearsing all the while his oft-told fable, and forgetting that iteration generally produces irritation, and that the world is now so hard-hearted that the widow-and-judge principle no longer avails. The beggar, astute as he is, doesn't seem to see that repetition weakens the original statement, just as some writers don't see that adjectives and adverbs are the direst enemies of substantives and verbs. Witness the story of the Irish servant given to tippling, who, having teased



his master to promise him a character, at last elicited the reply—

“Well then, there—I’ll strain a point and say you were sober.”

“Couldn’t ye sthrain it a leetle farther,” says Pat, “and say I was frayquintly sober?”

“Willingly,” replies the master, “I’ll say that with all my heart;” and poor Pat went off quite satisfied he had carried the day.

But I return to the unobtrusive and yet valuable advantages of omnibus-travelling.

I think it was Richard Steele who, speaking of a cultivated woman, remarked that “to know her was in itself a polite education;” it may have been said by Sam Johnson of Mrs. Montague, or by some other wit or worthy of that day of some other clever and refined contemporary: those who have read much are apt to be uncertain about their authorities, and it doesn’t matter here, for I only quote the story for the sake of the sentiment, and the sentiment for the sake of applying it, as I mean to remark—that we may derive practical education as well as instruction (don’t let us confound the two things, as the School Board fatally has) from very many sources, which we are thoughtless enough not to recognise.

Now in an omnibus we get a good deal of moral training, not only imperceptibly, but also “free, gracious, for nothing.”

To begin with the outside. What a new world of ideas would be opened to us if we could but extract his

autobiography from that patient, willing, generous, and much-abused creature the omnibus-horse: his perhaps glorious antecedents and brilliant ap-o-gee, before he knew what "gee-o" meant; then the gradual but inevitable deterioration of his forces, his functions, and his fortunes; his present hard lot, and the gloomy anticipations of his ultimate fate. Possibly—who knows, and why not?—after he has gone to the dogs—and cats,—he has a hereafter: *Poetical* justice demands it.

I once went minutely into the physiology of public carriages in Paris, having to write a paper on that subject for poor old *Fraser*, and there learnt that the life of a cab-horse in that city—said to be "*le paradis des femmes et l'enfer des chevaux*"—from the time he is put between the shafts, is limited to an average of no more than from three to five years! The Paris omnibus-horse is a different type of quadruped; he is not a reduced-in-circumstances racehorse, nor the wreck of a *cheval de maître* no longer fit for the *Bois*; he is bred for his calling, being of the steady, hardy, and sturdy race of *Percherons*, and is appropriated in Paris to that special service. It is very rare to see a *Percheron* in Paris employed in any other capacity. The Paris omnibus-horse is (as those of the L. G. O. C. used to be here) for the most part white; he has substantial, useful, well-knit limbs, and he cannot be said to appear ill-fed, but, on the contrary, he looks plump, hardy, and specially well-cared for. Even his caprices are humoured—perhaps I ought to say his prejudices are considered, and his sympathies respected. The secretary of the Paris Omnibus Company told me that

they as much as possible kept the same pair of horses (or three, as the case may be) together, and under the whip of the same driver, as it had been ascertained that they work together so much more happily, and therefore more readily, than when promiscuously harnessed and grouped.

Even an omnibus-horse has feelings—moral susceptibilities, I mean, and testifies in his dumb way to his dissatisfaction at being separated from the partner of his toils and the sharer of his kicks and curses. I often wonder why it never seems to occur to drivers of these gentle, generous, and intelligent quadrupeds, who deserve so well of their employers, to speak to them humanely, if not kindly. Why are horses, more especially cart-horses, who, provided they can but understand what the stupid fellow who drives them wants (which I am sure *I* very seldom can), never refuse to serve him to the best of their ability and the utmost of their power—why, I say, are they to be always dragged, and shoved, and kicked, and flogged, and sworn at at every turn? How strange, too, that they never resent this treatment, but forget and forgive with a magnanimity which is quite lost on those heartless savages their drivers. I am incorrect, however, in laying this down as a general proposition, for there are, I am happy to say, though not in this country, pleasing examples of the noble way in which a noble animal ought to be used. Go to Austria, and you will find that a horse is rarely ill-used there; but push on to Hungary, and I venture to assert that you will *never* hear a man swear at his horse. Seldom

does the Hungarian driver even employ the whip; the horse understands the gentle, coaxing tone which makes his burden light to him, and keeps up his spirits as well as his courage; *he* doesn't hang his head nor stand with his knees turned outwards—the personification of abject misery, in his utter loss of self-respect. Contrast the gallant-spirited horse of the *Putxtas* with the humiliated and dejected quadruped of our own streets, and see if you can help wishing that there may one day be a limbus of horse-tormentors, where this great and cowardly wrong will be expiated. Not that I believe in the doctrine of “compensations.” I regard it as a delusion and a fallacy: thus a falsehood may be acknowledged and condoned, but the character of the man who told it is gone, and he will never be believed again, even when he speaks truth. A wrong done must always remain a wrong: it is a *fait accompli*, and nothing can ever undo it. Still wrong-doers can be made to feel the nature of their wrong-doings, and you may depend on it there is nothing in the world which would be so just and fair, and so likely to diminish crime of all descriptions and degrees, as a system of *retributive* punishment, which would make the criminal practically realise the atrocity of his act in all its pitiless detail. How could he rationally object to the infliction on himself of exactly the same treatment (no less and no more) as he inflicted on his victim. Moreover, it would really be the most humane of punishments, for the probability is that, after a few examples, we should have no more criminals. Humanity-mongers, who have always more sympathy with the felon than with his helpless and

hapless victim, would of course cry out, for they always seem to lose sight of the fact that every criminal is a volunteer. We can well imagine the terrified cry of the cowardly bully and wife-murderer when he heard the solemn voice of the judge sentencing him to the identical death by which he destroyed the helpless object of his brutality. "Oh no, no; anything but *that*!" These hardened scoundrels can feel very tenderly for themselves.

But the horses—who is to vindicate *their* rights? I should like to see a New Jerusalem, the streets of which were paved not with gold, but with broken glass, where the merciless driver, harnessed to the vehicle he was wont to drive, will wear a heavy and ill-fitting harness, carry a large raw under his collar, while the horse he ill-treated mounts the box, holds the reins, tugs at the curb, and slashes about with the whip; only I am afraid no horse could be got to do it, he would be too generous and forbearing to give his quondam tyrant any amount of punishment approaching his due.

However, we may moderate the rancour of our feelings when we come to deal with 'bus-drivers, who cannot, as a rule, be said to ill-treat their cattle; indeed, from whatever cause, the exceptions are rare. When we speak of them as omnibus-drivers, we must, of course, be aware that, like all other bodies of men having much in common, there must be many points of resemblance between driver and driver, just as between passenger and passenger, while the most cursory observation will show how great is the variety which marks

them. Neither is this surprising, for taking the drivers of public vehicles generally, we may assume that, even in England, they are recruited from different classes and callings. In France the fact is as notorious as readily accounted for.

The perch of a hansom, a growler, or even a 'bus, is often the last resort of the horsey spendthrift, ruined by reckless or luckless speculations on the turf. Driving is perhaps the only thing that he has learnt to do well, and also that he can well take to in his reverses; so, casting aside the prejudices of caste, he gets into the box (no longer, alas! the "omnibus-box" of his wilder years) to lead a chequered life, unfortunately more likely to familiarise him with chequers than with cheques, and taking the check-string in his hand, he resigns himself to his newly-elected calling. He must try to console himself with the remembrance that, if he has sunk in the social scale, his position in other respects has become a more elevated one.

A gentleman wrote not long ago to the *Times* to deny the oft-stated and yet unquestionably veracious assertion that a great proportion of the drivers of the various street-vehicles in France consists of the disclassed and the unfrocked. Any one who cares enough about this branch of social economy to inquire into the facts will find that there is, to a considerable extent, blue blood among these public whips. And why should we doubt it when we reflect on the revolutions which have disturbed and disorganised all social order in that unsettled country? We know how families have there

become impoverished by confiscation and emigration, and deteriorated by the subdivision of estates, under that woefully mistaken system, aimed at the prosperity of the aristocracy but reacting with fatal effect on the classes which advocate it, and ultimately shaking to its centre the foundation of a nation—the abolition of the rights of primogeniture. The inevitable dispersion of families and other moral and material convulsions, consequent on these distortions of order, will amply account for any kind of social anomaly in France.

As regards priests, who are said to have been found driving horses, instead of leading flocks, it is scarcely possible but that some of those who have voluntarily (according to their feeling at the moment) or compulsorily at the will or persuasion of others, taken sacerdotal vows, should have found it not in them to maintain responsibilities, assumed during youth and ignorance of the world, of life, and of themselves; and when once they have abandoned the ranks of the priesthood, what is there left for them but the cab-rank and the protection of *St. Fiacre*? It is not difficult to recognise them under their assumed disguise, and the student of human nature is not long in discovering the Jehu who has slipped off his many-buttoned *soutane* for a driving *paletôt*, which he will probably wear till the undertaker makes him a box-coat, such as we shall all need for our final drive, unless cremation should prevail and render hydriotaphia the fashion, to the detriment of coffins. I will illustrate my theory by a fact.

A relative of mine was once walking in the Champs

Elysées with Méry, the well-known writer, when they observed, jogging on before them at a leisurely pace, a *citadine*, such as stand on the Paris cab-rank—that dismal file, which I once heard styled by an English cavalry-officer “the agony-column,” for, he said, “there wasn’t a single horse there that oughtn’t in common humanity to be shot.”

“Look at that rascal on the box,” said Méry. “I’ll lay any wager there’s a tonsure somewhere under the glazed hat of the *Compagnie*.”

“We can soon ascertain,” replied my friend; and without further preamble he hailed him with the word “*Auriga!*”

The man, taken off his guard, turned round and at the same time pulled up his horse. Our pedestrians, who had now come up with him, were preparing to mount.

“*In quo nos ducis?*” said one of them.

“*Loquere, domine, quia audit servus tuus,*” replied the driver, who began to see the humorous side of the incident.

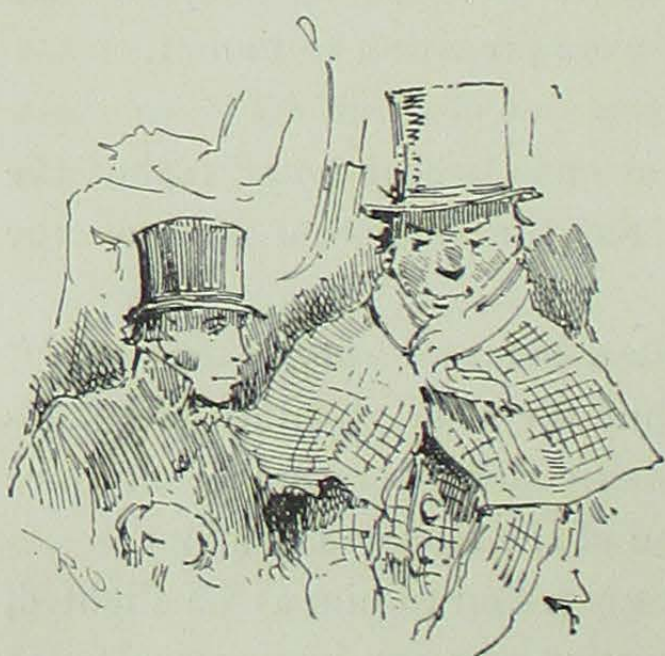
“*Duc nos ‘ad dirigendum pedes nostros in viam pacis,’*” answered Méry as he shut the door on himself and his companion, when his self-confessed reverence at once started off in the direction of the Rue de la Paix.

“Is it not true,” said my friend to him as he alighted, “that your original avocation was conducting souls, not fares?”

“Think you then, monsieur,” replied he, evading the question, “that fares have not souls?”

Without any of these ecclesiastical elements among

our London 'bus-drivers, there is still, as I have said, a considerable mixture among the men who hold the ribbons. Some we find rough and bluff, some rowdy and dowdy; some given to copious libations, some wearing, or professing to wear, the blue ribbon; some stiff and reserved, others good-natured and gossipy. Of this latter category I remember an amusing example one day when on the knife-board of a Fulham 'bus, immediately behind the driving-seat. I don't mean to say the box-seat of an omnibus can ever be esteemed as highly as that of a stage-coach, of which the driver, frequently a real swell, pays £50 or £60 a season for the privilege of driving it twice or so a week; but it has a relative value, and on a suburban 'bus is always a favourite perch. On



this occasion it was occupied by a young Catholic priest, the driver being an "Oirishman," and, as he would have styled himself, "one of the faithful." As we passed Fulham Palace he and the priest had some little confidential talk over the dis-

tribution of the loaves and fishes of the Establishment, and Jehu remarked, "It will be a moighty long time befoor a rale bishop gets into such a snug berth as that, in Protistint England. And then, yer riverince,"

continued he, "what a power of woives and children he's had;" for it was Bishop Blomfield who then occupied the See and the Palace, and he and his wife having each been previously married, there were now three families of children between them. "Shure," said he, "an hasn't *he* had one lot of children, and his woife another, an' now they've got another lot between 'em, and it bothers me to think how they'll git on together; for ye see, his'n moight marry her'n, and her'n moight marry his'n, but his'n *an'* her'n can't marry his'n *nor* her'n."

The Paris omnibus-driver is not usually a very refined character; he is not quite so miscellaneously selected, as is the Paris cab-driver. As a Paris omnibus-horse is created to draw omnibuses, so the Paris 'bus-driver seems created to drive them; yet rough as he may be, we are surprised to find him (as well as the roughest of the population of that unbelieving city) susceptible of that tender reverence for the dead which may be regarded as almost a Parisian idiosyncrasy.

Thus, never do we see a hearse, or even a coffin passing along the thoroughfares of the French metropolis to its last home but that every hat will be lifted, including those of the cab and omnibus driver, who, however coarse, are still amenable to this pious usage.

I once witnessed a striking instance of the almost mechanical expression of this feeling among Parisians in the Rue St. Denis. I was approaching the church of that name when I observed a dead-lock of carriages in front of it. As the doors were draped with black, it was evident

there was a *messe des morts* going on inside, and the encumbering carriages (for the deceased was evidently a "*grand mort*") had blocked the way, so as to cause a collision between two omnibuses which had met on the spot. The drivers were hurling at each other tall words in great abundance, from a not very select vocabulary, and emphasised them with their whips, which, as they stood up, they brandished in a menacing attitude. The roar was also vociferous, some siding with one, some with the other. Suddenly the church doors were thrown open, and the bearers appeared carrying the corpse. The crowd was instantly hushed, and all hats were raised. Our disputants raised theirs too, but there was no truce, not even an instant's suspension of their vociferous abuse; nor did they vary their respective (and respectful) attitudes till the dispersion of the carriages enabled them to disengage their wheels.

Of the exterior of an omnibus, the knife-board necessarily forms no unimportant part, and I have sometimes seen its occupants cut a very absurd figure when a foot-passenger below is disposed to apply to them the announcement one so often sees painted in large letters on a wide board just beneath their feet. Occasionally it is the colossal advertisement of a dramatic performance, of a conjuring entertainment, or of some trade article. Who has not observed "PICKLES" thus forced upon the British public, and when a row of Saturday-half-holiday-young-men on the spree occupy the bench, the word seems ludicrously applicable to the occasion.

I remember once seeing two passengers from the very

extremes of society respectively—one a priggish young gentleman wearing a very dapper suit ; the other, if not a sweep, bearing the nearest possible resemblance to one. These being the only two “outsides,” nothing could be more absurd than the conspicuous inscription beneath them, “THE CORSICAN BROTHERS.” A still more amusing application, however, occurred one very hot day in summer, when the omnibus being crammed to suffocation with passengers dreading a sunstroke, one knowing old fellow sat calmly outside enjoying the air, his head protected by a puggaree, and his back by a large white green-lined umbrella. On the broad board above which he sat was painted in large letters the name of a piece then performing, “NOT SUCH A FOOL AS HE LOOKS.”

But as we have arrived at the advertisement department, let us come down and “inquire within.” What a satire or series of satires on poor human nature in those which line the compartments of the roof and cover all other available spaces ! Not only do they serve to entertain the *désœuvré* passenger as he sits there mentally reposing, but they supply information for his future benefit and advantage, and also perhaps slightly for that of the advertiser ; they tell him where he can procure everything that man, woman, or even child can need, from a cradle to a coffin, and they intimate where every intermediate whim can be indulged, and at what cost, with equal ingenuity and impartiality. Here he will find cleverly announced where “the best tea in the world is to be had at 1s. 9d. per lb. ;” and while I am asking myself whether the public could be gullible enough to swallow

that bait without looking a second time at the wording and punctuation, I hear an innocent old lady unconsciously reply to my query, as she apostrophises a young woman, her companion.

"Only look, my dear, the best tea in the world; that must mean the very best, and only one and nine! Do take down the name for me; I must really try that. I do like a good cup of tea. I've been 'aving my tea from Hedinburgh, where my married daughter lives, and it was very good for a long time; but la! bless you, it's all changed now; there's so much adultery there, that I've made up my mind to give it up."

I am rather tender-hearted when I see old folks imposed upon, and I feel a singular pleasure in exposing fraud. I therefore resolved to break for once through my normal rule of keeping myself to myself in a public carriage, and addressed the poor soul by way of opening her wondering eyes to the ruse of the advertiser; but I fancy, so determined was she to believe it, that I failed to convince her that though his tea might be the best to be got at "one and nine," it might still be very bad tea; that, in fact, his announcement, though so plausible, was neither more nor less than a gross and unpardonable "fifty-one" (that is my decorous way of masking the ugly word LI).

I may observe here, apropos of selected words, that where people have a very strong feeling about anything, I think they do well to acquire a habit of employing veiled terms. I once knew a gentleman who was of so hasty a temper, that when anything irritated him, he so far forgot his manners and his principles as to utter words which by

common consent have been tabooed in the vocabulary of "genteel" people. Ultimately he took to piety, and becoming a Catholic, probably preferred not to have to accuse himself in his periodical confessions of these unseemly expressions. Still the little explosions had become so much a part of his nature, that there was no ridding himself of them; he therefore had recourse to the employment of a harmless word that could give no scandal, and selected it very ingeniously so that he might constantly be heard when out of temper stamping his foot and roaring out "Holofernes" at the top of his voice: the name was sufficiently infernal for his purpose.

There is another class of veiled language yclept "slang," which seems to be steadily making its way in all "civilised" communities. I hardly know whether to say more especially in America, though that slang is wonderfully pungent and expressive; but in France it has reached such a pitch, that within the last year or two it has been found necessary to publish a dictionary of what is now termed "*La Langue Verte*." Of course thieves have long had, *pour cause*, a slang of their own in all countries, and Vidocq, the *ex-chevalier d'industrie* and subsequent *chef de police*, long since published his *Dictionnaire de l'Argot des Voleurs*, in which, among other lexicographical curiosities, he explained that the term "*pick-pocket*" was necessarily transplanted from the English, because the type was unknown in his country, till introduced from *perfidie Albion*, and therefore the language had no word for it. I don't think he gave the same reason for the transplantation of the word

“gentleman,” for which there is also no equivalent in the French language. Now, however, there is in France a distinct and separate *argot* for every class and every calling. That of the *restaurant* is perhaps the one most popularly familiar, and probably every British tourist now understands what is meant by the once obscure terminology “*château aux pommes*,” and no longer supposes that an “*idem aux choux*” means a slice of some new animal garnished with cabbage.

The *argot* of society is gradually becoming a language *per se*, and if our children are to circulate among the “upper ten” of that nation which contrives most illogically to maintain its exclusiveness in the teeth of those tall but utterly meaningless words, “*Liberté! Egalité!! Fraternité!!!*” we must put them through the grammar of the *Langue Verte*. Alas for the evils of “high-pressure” education! What a mass of fresh studies are accumulating in the education of each succeeding generation; unfortunately brains don’t increase together with the augmentation of matter that has to be stuffed into them: *hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

The omnibus-conductor’s clippings of her Majesty’s English are, it would seem, not less terse than other *argots*. One day I saw a lady putting her fare into the conductor’s hand; as he took it he inquired, with a confidential bow, “Side Tot?” The expression fairly baffled me, more especially as the lady responded to this strange cypher-language with an equally mysterious brevity by the simple monosyllable “This.” I was still more astonished, as she was too well dressed and too generally

respectable to be on such familiar terms with an omnibus conductor as this abridged colloquy entitled me to suppose. However, he presently addressed the same query to a grave-looking elderly gentleman, who took the mode of expression as anything but a joke, for he put his hand up to his ear and resented it by roaring out an indignant "WHAT?" This answer was monosyllabic too, but it came with an expression quite different from the other. The conductor at once proffered the interpretation of his inquiry, which proved to be quite harmless after all. It was "On which side of Tottenham Court Road did you get in, please, sir?" He had, you see, no intention of being uncivil, only he apparently considered life was not long enough to justify the employment of thirteen words when two would answer all the purpose.



I resume my examination of the advertisements which surround me. As I have eschewed matrimony, my eye of course precisely rests on those having reference to it; for *matches*, I see, occupy a prominent place—matches of all varieties, from the "Tiger Safeties"—so "safe" that they won't always light even on the box, and are therefore, unlike a manager's eye, which *will* kindle the moment it lights on an empty box—from such matches, I repeat, to those others (often, alas! mis-matches), *said*

to be made where no brimstone is ; though, to study some of them, you could swear they had been contrived in the other place. I will remark in passing, however, that I always fancy I can trace a more or less pronounced odour of brimstone in all matches, though sometimes there may be a predominance of treacle—for a time.

The hints to speculators in matches matrimonial, and the duty and happiness of matching oneself, are mostly accentuated by touching and suggestive illustrations ; as, for example, that of Messrs. Hill & Dale's wedding-cakes, which exhibits a blushing young bride in the conventional attire of "orange flowers, cream satin, and Honiton lace" (there is honey even in the lace at that stage, and cream in the satin ; later on it may be *whipped* cream) casting a longing eye on the "love" she can't see but still believes in, and the "iceing" she won't see *nor* believe in, which cover a specimen production from the ovens of the firm, whose joined names are so appropriate ; or is it accidentally that they typify the ups and downs that await those who venture on that lifelong experiment ?

Then, again, those who know what it is to select a wedding-present ought to be thankful to find themselves gratuitously informed of the almost incredible fact that, supposing they happen to have "ten thousand" relatives or so, about to marry, they may select all the gifts at one fell swoop, and polish off the whole transaction at a single prolific fancy-stationer's in Oxford Street. Now I humbly venture to think there is a defective knowledge of human nature in the wording of this

réclame—a mistake which (according to Louis XIV., of politic memory) is worse than a crime. “Ten thousand” is a vague, generalised numeral, which literally means nothing. “Ten thousand,” as it were, *pro quolibet magno numero*; ex., “I’ve told you so ten thousand times.” “I’d ten thousand times rather marry a nigger than a vixen,” &c. We all know how this sort of thing is said; but if we want really to state a fact, we astonish our hearers a great deal more, and produce a much more striking effect, by leaving no doubt about our accuracy. If I had, therefore, been consulted before this advertisement was put in type by Messrs. Garkins & Potto, I should have suggested the substitution of 9999, because that precision at once carries on it the stamp of truth. We have only to refer to the story of the Californian sportsman, who, being a Californian, never exaggerated, and one day mentioned in a cursory way that he had that season bagged nine hundred and ninety-nine partridges.

“I think,” remarked a listener, “that when it comes to that number, you would be entitled to round it into a thousand.”

“Sir,” replied he indignantly, “you must have a very mean opinion of me, if you think I could jeopardise my honour as a man of veracity for the sake of one miserable partridge.”

Champagne and baking-powder, whisky and marking-ink, towelling and cigars, coals and spectacles, present themselves in a perplexing confusion, and are offered at such a price, that we begin to wonder whether we had not better lay in a store of each at once, because, as Mrs.

Toodles so justly remarked, "If we did want 'em, how convenient it would be to find them all ready in the house."

Passing on, we arrive at a new form of the once popular but now meaningless question, "How are you off for soap?" It is addressed to us by the pictured representation of a grinning negro-boy, half of whose face has been scoured white by the advertiser's compound. I once knew a boy who each time his mother scrubbed him used to blubber out, "I wish I was a black boy." Alas! he little knew what miracles modern science was going to work; in these days of progress, even a black skin would not have secured him from the daily scouring.

Patti and Langtry have been pressed into the service of this indefatigable soap-boiler; that pair of photos have become Pears's trade-mark, one on either side of every 'bus, suggesting at the same time how frail a thing is beauty. . . . No, sir, I did not say *a* beauty, nor a professional beauty, nor anything of the kind. I emphatically deny it, and beg you not to interrupt. . . . How frail a thing is beauty, since in both these cases it has contrived entirely to escape the photographer's art, unless we are to believe that one of these ladies is as ill-tempered as the other is coarse. Any portraits more hideous I think I never saw, unless it be those of Petrarch and Laura from the Manfrini collection in Venice, which so grievously disappointed Byron; and well they might. Petrarch *always* looks as if he had the toothache, with his face eternally tied up, but in this case he looks as if he resented it; and Laura!—well, there's no accounting

for tastes, but one can only hope her portrait, as an Irishman would say, was meant for somebody else. Madam Patti's dress is ill-cut and worse fitting, a difficulty Madam Langtry has cut by cutting the dress altogether.

Another panel in the omnibus-roof is adorned with an illustration of something of which the studious passenger may amuse himself by guessing the meaning; for myself, as I contemplate, day by day, the smiling countenance of the lady whose delicate blue silk dress has been stained by the clumsy but penitent old gentleman who stands stupidly staring at the destruction he has wrought, I cannot help reverting to certain home scenes, where the expression I have generally observed on similar occasions is not at all like this, and I mentally ejaculate, "*O si sic omnia!*" Surely this must be the pictured image of that angelic being who, when a gentleman—not her husband—was unlucky enough to upset a glass of wine into her lap, instantly reassured him, with the sweetest smile, declaring "it was not of the smallest consequence; there really was no harm done; it was such very dry sherry."

There is, we know, great diplomacy on the part of a woman in remaining

"Mistress of herself though china fall,"

but the merit of her equanimity is considerably diminished if it be due not to self-command but to her consciousness that as soon as the perpetrator of the accident is well out of the way, Mr. Somebody or other's tincture

will make the damaged object "better as new," in fact that next time she wears it she will not have a stain upon her dress.

So much for the ladies; but the very infant, muling and puling in his nurse's arms, may in an omnibus hear of something to his advantage. What are waterproof roofings, lawn-rollers, spectacles *v.* blindness, or even steam mowing-machines, to him? What cares he for



shilling razors, virgin vinegar, or Colman's mustard, nasty hot stuff, which as yet he knows by external application only? What should he do with Reckless Blue or Stiff's starch, even though it be "the largest in the world"? His eye passes over all these absurdities, to rest complacently on Drs. Brown's and Jones's "Infant food," on Dr. Robinson's patent feeding bottles, or Smith's nursery biscuits—

. . . . ut pueris olim, dant crustula blandi
Doctores

and small as he still is, his babyship's favour is already courted and his infant patronage solicited on behalf of the only articles in which he is as yet a connoisseur.

There is a joke out against the New Yorkers to the effect, that if a horse drop down dead in the Broadway, his carcass is pasted over with advertisements before

the knacker can fetch it away; but I really can't see why the same should not be said of the Londoners. Where can you show a square yard of wall, roof, or floor-space in this vasty, nasty city which, unless under menaced prosecution, is not hired out for that purpose, not to mention the drop-curtains of certain of our theatres, which are pressed into the service—a breach of good taste it was left for the children of the nineteenth century to perpetrate? Surely we afford reasonable excuse to our French neighbours to style us a nation of shopkeepers; not that they are any better themselves—beginning with the continual advertisement of their political principles, “*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*,” a trinity of humbug, placarded everywhere, and the ambiguous R. F. profusely exhibited on that annual *fête* which nobody wants, so that for the majority “*Réjouissance Forcée*” is the only interpretation these consecrated initials will bear: who has not smiled at the ingenuity which first devised those small circular advertisement-topped tables at which the Paris *flâneur* sits sipping his interminable little thimbleful of *absinthe*, these useful pieces of furniture being a gratuitous offering from the advertising agent to the keeper of the *café*.

I remember some years ago a London fancy stationer who tried the scheme of selling stamped envelopes at tenpence per dozen to any one who didn't mind sending them to his correspondents charged with the vendor's advertisement inside the flap! Probably however the attempt did not pay, for it was abandoned before very long. I suppose every one is conscious of the assistance of this nature

he is compelled to afford any shopkeeper whose goods he carries home himself; all paper bags are now printed with the shopman's name, address, &c., conspicuously displayed on both sides, so that the bearer of its contents has no choice but to exhibit it as he goes along, unconsciously acting the part of a sandwich-man! Akin to this are, or perhaps I ought now to say were, those *fiacres* set up by a Paris company, which reduced its fares to three-fourths of the regulation tariff, provided any one chose to drive about parading all round him on the outside of the vehicle a selection of advertisements of every kind: and some were very un-select.

Appropriate names and combinations of names constitute another form of advertisement, and have made the fortune of many a firm besides that of Messrs. Hill & Dale, just reverted to; "Flint & Steel," was not badly imagined; but why shoe-makers, and not gun-makers, should have assumed it, I never rightly understood, and consider "Waukenphast" (if not almost too obvious) at least more to the point. "Blackbird," is not bad for a mourning establishment, especially one that adheres so consistently to its principles that if you go in and by chance ask one of the mutes at the "weeds-counter" for lavender-gloves sewn with black, he will inform you with the prescribed sigh, that "mitigated afflictions are served in the semi-mourning department."

That professional men may soon be expected to adopt an eccentric mode of impressing their names on their "clients" seems possible when we read on the brass-plate of an imposing door under an imposing portico

close to an imposing square the (perhaps also) imposing name of Mr. Stickering Stick! Now *there* is a name the ingenuity of which defies imitation, and it is one which, even were we requested to forget it, would stick to our memory like a barley-sugar stick. If the name be genuine, Mr. S. S. is singularly fortunate in owning it, and he does well to stick to it and to emphasize it as he has.

In short, is there a device within the imagination of man that has *not* been resorted to by way of drawing public attention to whatever speculation the advertiser thinks he can make money by? The "circular" medium has become quite an industry for trying to raise the circulating medium; but it is getting rather overdone; the puffs are so obvious, and there are so many issued, that we may categorize them with epitaphs, of which it has been truly said "one-half will never be believed, the other never read;" and the only effect they produce in the household is to add to the weight of the waste-paper sold to the tradesmen by the servants in extravagant, and by the master in thrifty, establishments.

But the strange anomaly in all this is that although a shopman will compass heaven and earth to win one customer, when he has caught him he will treat him so ill as to fling away all the advantage he seemed so eager to secure: the calculations of the shopkeeper gyrate in a circle of his own, within which it is in vain for us to penetrate; but the fraternity of the counter know very well what they are about, and manage their affairs in a way which baffles all our investigations. A friend of

mine, a woman of wealth and rank, had been shamefully cheated by a well-known firm in Oxford Street; she quietly paid the over-charges, but told them she should not trouble them any more.

"Your ladyship can do as you please," replied the foreman; "your custom is of no consequence to us. London is a large place, and if each person only deals

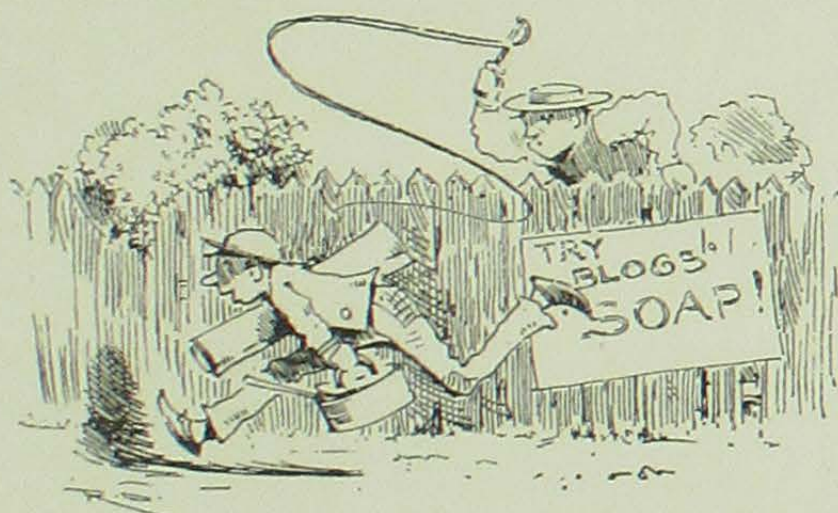


with us once, that will be quite sufficient to keep our establishment going."

Logical people might think that if each person dealt there twice or even oftener, it would be better; but we must suppose we know nothing about the matter, since such was this "gentleman's" assertion, and such is practically the general policy of the trade.

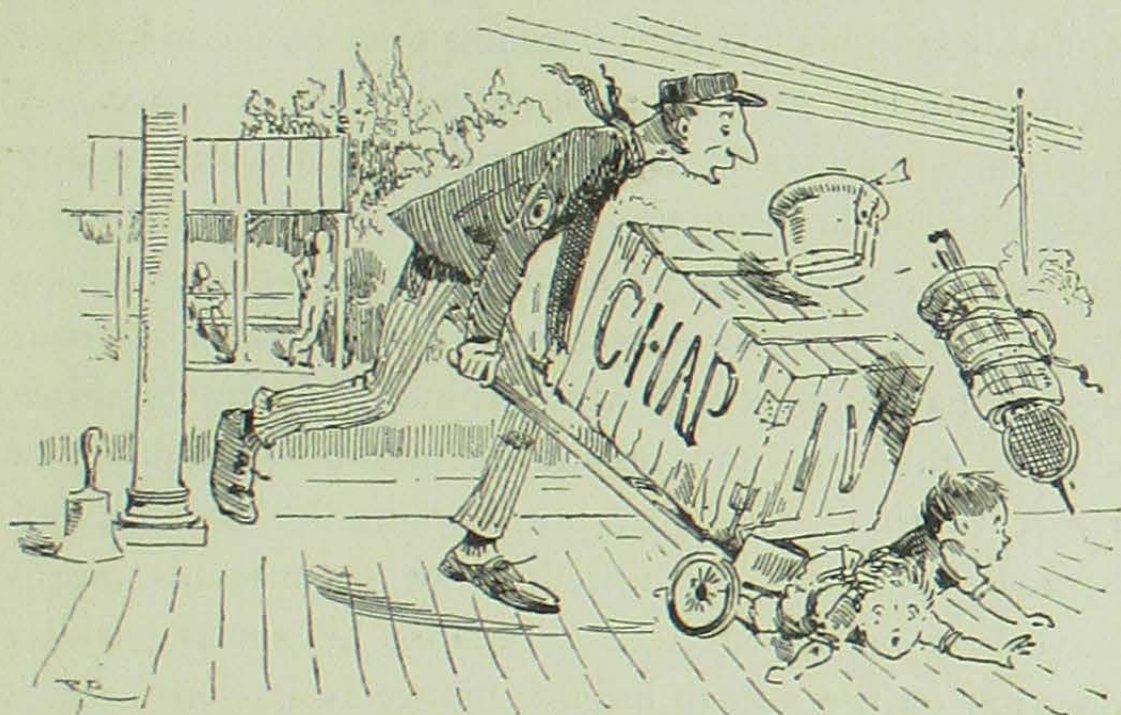
There is perhaps no feature of our times more charac-

teristic of their spirit than the importance assumed by this ephemeral literature; for advertising is a literature *per se*. It has a special style, whether etymologically or typographically, and proficiency in it is only to be acquired by reflection and study. If gain be the object of life, then is this speculative art worth the time, skill, and labour it requires; and there is no doubt it gives occupation not only to many brains, but to many hands. Every expedient suited *ad captandum vulgus* is becoming so "used up," that it requires an exhaustless imagination



to devise a continual supply of matter that shall startle and "fetch" the public? But alas! this is but one department of advertising; for next, these eye-opening statements must be presented in technical language, prose or rhyme, and must then be thrown into type of all founts, and be printed in showy colours, and on staring paper; finally, they must be illustrated by a pencil at once artistic and humorous. In fact, when we take up an illustrated paper now-a-days, it is difficult to distinguish the matter from the advertisements. Each day's experi-

ence of the advance made in this wonderful system of announcement and of the degree of luxury to which it is carried makes us wonder how it can possibly pay. We are bound to suppose that shopkeepers and Companies know their own business, for we can all see how well they thrive, but I confess that to myself it is a puzzle—one of those which, like “what becomes of the pins,” outsiders are not likely to solve. Great indeed is the mystery of advertising.



Opportunities afforded by omnibus travelling for studying individual and class-character—Gradual change in the description of omnibus-passengers—Perceptible advantage of same—Our ephemeral relations with our kind—"Little" things—Dreamlike changes—What is the difference between the retrospect of a dream and of an event?—Ouida—Religio Medici—Lord Houghton—Palingenius—Sleeping and waking dreams—Theories of dreams—A remark of George Eliot's—An episode of travel which might be called "The seven (railway) sleepers."—Promiscuous meetings—Conventional observances—Meetings and partings.

It is true we may read the characters of many of our kind in (and between) the lines of their advertisements; but, turning from these to the travellers, the omnibus affords us opportunities of appreciating the peculiarities of various types from the living model, and as omnibus-passengers now-a-days are contributed by almost all classes, the student of nature has before him a wide

choice of subjects. A few years ago few above the rank of a small or perhaps middle-class shopkeeper availed themselves of this public conveyance—indeed it is probable that the high-class shopkeeper (and more probably still, his “lady”) does not even now condescend to honour the people’s carriage with his presence. A nobleman may travel as he pleases and descend to any level without losing caste, because he *is* a nobleman, and instead of dishonouring his rank, he honours the vehicle he employs; but the shopkeeper who fabricates his own dignity has to look well after it, and if *he* travel third-class or take an omnibus-lift he might be supposed to resort to that expedient, not because he chooses, but because his tastes are unrefined or because his means leave him no alternative, or because his social position does not entitle him to indulge higher aspirations.

At the same time it must have struck all those who do travel by omnibus, that of late they, for by far the most part, find the seats filled by the well-dressed and the well-mannered, the women being evidently gentlewomen; as for the men, omnibuses have always been more or less generally frequented by gentlemen even of position and rank; of course there are plebeians in a larger proportion, but we cannot help feeling that the manners of the latter have been beneficially influenced by even the ephemeral association with their superiors.

Rarely does one meet a person who could be reasonably objected to on the score of character. Whether it does not answer the purpose of a certain class to thrust their over-dressed persons, over-ringed fingers and loud ways,

into these vehicles, or whether they find means of being conveyed in more luxurious carriages, is a question we cannot decide; let us be thankful they are not among us.

Now and then we descry a young (or perhaps, alas! not young) chorus-singer or ballerina of some humble theatre or music-hall, carrying, whether in the *poudre de riz* that hangs on her face, or the roll of music she carries in her hand, or the little bundle that reposes on her lap, the tell-tale insignia of her calling, and sometimes she is flippant and self-sufficient as she tells the conductor, with a glance round her that addresses itself to all present, to set her down at the *Canterberry* or the *Hoxford*; desirous to let it be known that she is "duly reared in her vocation" but this is the exception, and while it is easy to see who and what these girls are, we are glad to note the general quietness and modesty of their demeanour, due also, let us hope, to the presence of the gentler classes. There is thus a far wider scope than formerly for the exercise of social observation and speculation in a public carriage, and we may sit in our corner and meditate on many things. Some people despise trifles; Dr. Johnson said, "Life is made up of little things," and *little* indications often furnish a clue to conclusions of import.

It has been said the proper study of mankind is woman; Pope says it is man; I adopt the two opinions, and consider it to be both: we seem somehow to yield readily to an impulse to idealise the shadowy and superficial contact into which we are brought with those acquaintances of an hour who people our waking dreams and seem to have only a temporary and passing influence

on our lives : for after all, what is life but a succession of dreams? . . . Look back upon your past, call up one by one out of its grave each epoch of your bygone existence, and say if it be not so.

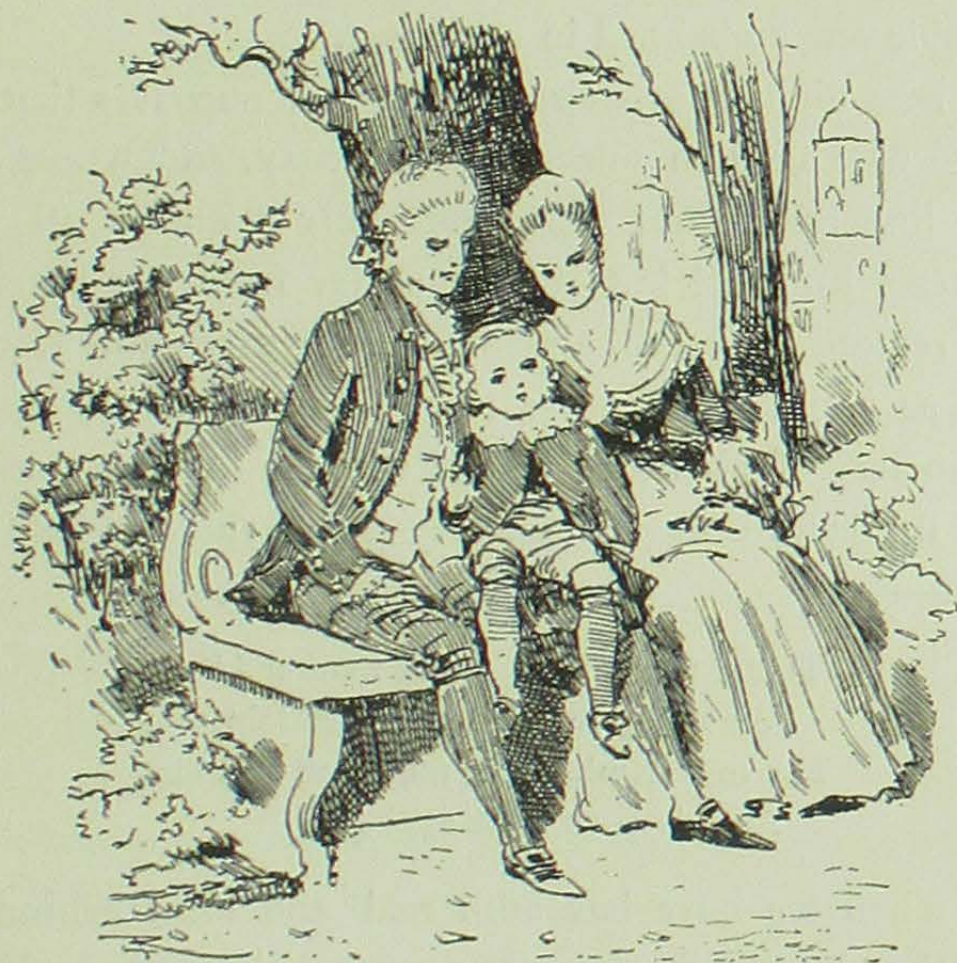
It is true that in a sleeping dream we have to do with ideas, whereas in a waking one we have to deal with facts—or rather, it is they that deal with us ; still if we wait but long enough those facts dissolve themselves to all intents and purposes into the category of ideas, and become so mingled with them that we almost cease to distinguish the so-called “real” from the ideal :

“An age when past is but a thought !”

Go back in imagination to some episode of your infant years—there are incidents in the life of every one that stand out more vividly than the rest and as it were illumine the general vagueness—recall, if you can, your own grotesque costume, and those of the beings who peopled the scene. Your father, probably, wore powdered hair and a pig-tail ; nankeen breeches and gaiters, a blue-coat with brass buttons, a white waistcoat, frilled shirt and ruffles, shoe-buckles ; a couple of watches, with chains and seals were possibly dangling from his fobs, while your mother kept you at a respectful distance with a due regard to her costly stiff brocade, and your nurse’s head was covered with a much be-laced and be-ribboned cap. You will not have forgotten the ill-modelled and worse-executed toys of that far-off nursery. What curiosities they would be now, those wooden-boats of yore, that were drawn along on wheels ; these would-be horses,

in shape unlike any quadruped that ever was created, painted black, and pied all over with round white spots as big as shillings. Close your eyes, and you see it all once more before you.

Perhaps all this occupied your sleeping thoughts last night. If so, where is the difference between the two



dreams? The father, mother, nurse, and the little child that *was* you, *were* facts undoubtedly, but where are they now? Except for your surviving conviction that they did exist, in what way are they now less ideal than their shadowy simulacra which moved about you, caressed you and talked with you, in your last night's dream?

What *is* real, and what is ideal? We pass two-thirds

of our lives in what we call a waking state, with persons who seem to be concrete, substantial and real; but a change passes over them which we term death; we look round and they are no more beside us

“—vanished, ghost-like, into air!”

—they have ceased to have any existence but that impalpable one embalmed in our heart.

It is as difficult as weird to persuade ourselves that the friend who died in our arms yesterday, and whose kiss still lingers on our lips, not only “knows all that Rameses knows,” but is now as far from our reach as that remote monarch, already a mere myth and abstraction, as *he* is! The other third of our lives we pass in the society of phantom beings who, as long as they are with us, seem to us as absolutely real as those of flesh and blood—

“There, the babe is on its mother’s breast
Who long in the grave hath lain,
For in dreamland all the loved and lost
Are given us back again,”

and when we have left both real and ideal behind us, and they have alike become no more than memories, in what respect, I ask, do they differ?

I think it is Ouida who wrote, “Dreams are the best part of life,” and in some sense they are. A pleasant dream is often pleasanter than reality, and if it be sad, we wake from it, and in time forget it; whereas of one thing we may be sure, of all sad things there is none so sad as life.

The quaint and original author of *Religio Medici* asserts: "In one dream I can compose a comedy, behold the action thereof, apprehend the jests, and laugh myself awake at their conceits;" and from the pen of that thoughtful writer, Lord Houghton, we have the following reference to that abnormal condition of the mind in sleep, which contentedly accepts the most grotesque and violent incongruities—

"It is the nature of the life of dreams,
To make all action of our mental springs,
Howe'er unnatural, discrepant, and strange,
Be as the unfolding of most usual things,"

and so nothing seems strange in that "land of reconciled impossibilities," cats talk, parrots reason, hundreds of miles are traversed in a minute, and we accept it all with the full consent of our mind, such as it is in sleep.

The theory of dreams is a very fascinating subject, and I must curb my pen, or it might lead me into an indiscreet divagation into those very remote and bewildering paths into which the philosophers and physiologists who have preceded us have penetrated to very little purpose. Why had not *Œdipus* the wit to puzzle the Sphinx with this unriddled enigma of life when he had solved hers?

But see how these contemplations carry us away, for this digression is the result of my habit (good or bad), as Marcellus Palingenius puts it—

" diversos hominum perpendere mores
Diversos spectare locos et vivere ubique."

It is good, I think (at least for some of us), to follow any train of thought that takes us out of ourselves; it is a habit that tends to make us more human, more considerate, and (when occasion occurs) to teach us that valuable mode of appreciating our duty to our neighbour, viz: "to put ourselves in his place." It widens our interest in life, and gives enlargement to our thoughts and feelings, which are too apt to be centred in ourselves, and thus

"Want air, and spoil, like bales unopened to the sun."

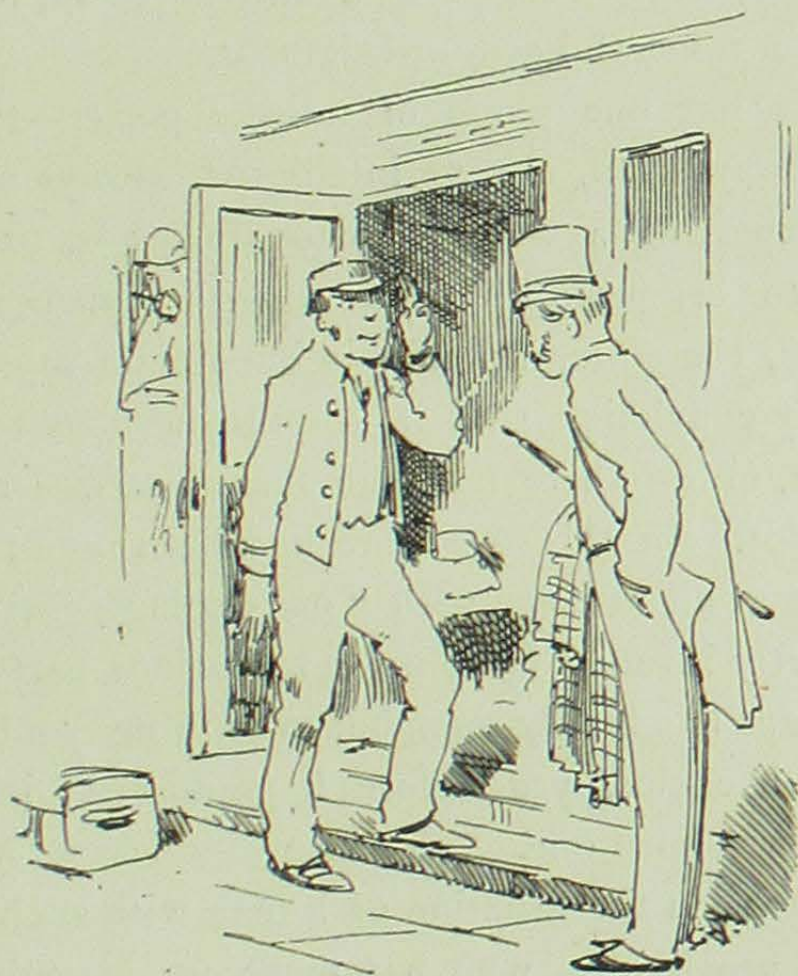
I remember a subtle remark of George Eliot's, which often comes into my mind when I find myself surrounded by a carriage-full of fellow-beings whom I never saw before, and in all probability shall never see again, because it expresses what it is so natural one should feel under the circumstances.

"Any one," she says, "keenly watching the stealthy convergence of human lots, may see a slow preparation of effects from one life to another, which tells like a calculated irony on the indifference or the frozen stare we bestow upon our unintroduced neighbour. Destiny stands sarcastically by, with our *dramatis personæ* folded in her hand."

There is a degree of adventure in casual acquaintance under whatever circumstances—the charm of the *imprévu*; one never knows what may come of it.

Many years ago, when I was a youngster, an episode of travel which impressed itself very vividly, occurred to me, and as it is in some sort an illustration of these remarks, I will relate it here.

I had arrived at the station, had taken my ticket, and was proceeding along the platform with my hand-bag and the various *etceteras* which modern civilisation has prescribed under the circumstances and which Sauval has called somewhat paradoxically "*les superfluités nécessaires*"—peering into the carriages as I passed them, with a view



to selecting the one which best corresponded with my ideas of comfort, when I was suddenly accosted by an obsequious porter, who, with an apologetic, "Allow me, sir," possessed himself of my paraphernalia, and invited me to follow him past the long line, till he came to a carriage of which he opened the door, turning to me at the same time with a protecting glance, felt the foot-warmer, to

insinuate it had been filled within the memory of man, deposited in a snug, unoccupied corner my bag, my rug, and my umbrella, and then making way for me to pass, touched his cap and remarked "This is your carriage, sir." The fact was obvious. I had already said to myself, "This means sixpence," and had prepared the coin accordingly, which I now slipped into his hand, receiving in return a respectful acknowledgment.

I know but one phase of railway porter—the man who is always civil, always intelligent, always obliging, always expecting a fee, but who always is, or always appears to be, perfectly satisfied with sixpence. This small fine, therefore, I willingly impose on myself, and record my conviction that it is quite needless to exceed that sum, unless there be some special service rendered to justify it. In this case there had been none; indeed, I was not at all satisfied with "my carriage," which was very shortly invaded by a most robustious party, tolerable perhaps to a family-man, but even in my youth I was a sworn bachelor, yea before I graduated; indeed, I believe I was born one.

Imagine then the situation of a man with such limited domestic proclivities, who has made up his mind to a peaceful journey of some hours, suddenly finding himself in the midst of a lively nursery. I called to mind the remarks of that father who, though he *was* a father, used to say, "I don't mind the children making a noise, if they will only keep quiet;" but I did mind the noise of other people's children, and I thought that on the whole I should prefer the company of a keeper with his travel-

MY MYSTERIOUS NEIGHBOURS.



ling menagerie. There was mamma with one restless pet on her knee at my right, on the opposite seat, a nurse with a suckling, which fact alarmed me more still, as I once heard of a party who took a severe cold by sitting too near a wet-nurse; next to her was a maid, whose efforts to control a noisy boy and keep him from physically as well as morally treading on my toes were continually frustrated by his mother's encouragement to disobey her. The nets too were filled to overflowing with apparently the stock of a large toy-shop, comprising drums, and, O horror! fifes and penny trumpets. "Good gracious me!" thought I, "why can't people come into the world grown up!" and I have no doubt my fellow-travellers read it in the scowl with which I drew myself and my belongings still farther into the corner.

" All who have seen a human nursery, saw
How mothers love their children's squalls and chucklings."

In the two remaining places sat a middle-aged but most singular-looking man, and with him a woman apparently young but closely veiled: I may well say singular-looking, for his countenance, which, though it might have been called handsome wore a strange and forbidding expression, was as far as possible studiously concealed.

His tall figure was muffled in the heavy folds of a dark cloth Spanish cloak, thrown over the shoulder after the fashion of Spaniards, so that his mouth was entirely covered, while the broad brim of a somewhat pointed black felt hat descended to his eyebrows. He seemed fidgetty and ill at ease, though perhaps he was only

annoyed by the same cause as myself, and looked upon the coming journey with similar misgivings. Be that as it may, he presently turned to his companion, and, muttering a few words in her ear, both suddenly rose and left the carriage.

I scarcely know whether it was in emulation of this spirited step, or in alarm at the entrance of two rattle-brained young officers talking at the top of their voices, that I summoned up courage to follow the prudent example, and, picking up my goods, I jumped out and found myself once more on the platform.

The first person I ran against was my obliging porter, who instantly inquired what he could do for me.

"Put me, my good fellow," said I, "into any carriage, so as it be but *child-less*."

"Here you are, sir, but there's no more corners left," said the porter, opening another, close to which I stood, and, handing me in my belongings, shut me in. One place alone was vacant, and having taken possession of the same and turned round to reconnoitre the situation, who should I find immediately facing me in the centre seat but my former neighbour again, who had so abruptly taken his departure from the other carriage, and the veiled lady beside him. The circumstance was not a very surprising one, still I did not altogether like it; at the same time, it was of no real consequence, and as I could not migrate a second time, I thought no more about it; besides, my attention was just now drawn off by the movement on the platform—a scene always old and yet always new, always, therefore, full of interest.

Old! aye, and hackneyed too in its recurrence, but ever new in its detail, and, amid a multitude of commonplaces, numbering the beginnings . . . and endings too of many a romance in real life.

There was the well-known, oft-experienced hurrying to and fro; the protracted partings of friends illustrating the *proverbe travesti*, "*Qui trop embrasse, manque le train*"—hastened steps of now one and then another, and again a rush of belated passengers dashing about in a frantic search after vacant places, and, of course, hopelessly seeking them in the same carriage; then came the heavy rumble of the trollies making the platform vibrate again as they were driven violently along by running porters conveying separate detachments of late luggage to the still yawning mouth of the well-packed van; now it was the call of enterprising newspaper-boys recklessly endeavouring to dispose of their stock-in-trade, and only intent on raising their cries above the running accompaniment of escaping steam. All this, however, was soon cut short by the final banging of doors along the whole length of the train, and across these, last looks, last sighs, last words were being exchanged, and rapid hand-shakes of various import were being snatched, while reiterated "God bless yous" and "Good-byes" were hurriedly passing: some, cordial and tender; some, mute and heartbreaking; some loud and hollow; some, intimating the very wrenching of the soul; some, mere conventional formalities and irksome repetitions, expressing everything but what they meant.

"Tickets, please,"—exclaimed the guard, and then, hastening on with provoking indifference, while hands

were still fumbling in pockets, seemed to wish it understood that he was making April-fools of the passengers, or that the ticket-game has been established for the special amusement of himself and his fellows, by way of varying their monotonous duties. The shrill whistle blew its "ear-piercing" blast and the train puffed majestically out of the station.

"Combien d'images emporte ainsi un train qui passe ; et avec elles, combien de destinées précipitées vers le bonheur ou vers le malheur dans le lointain et l'inconnu! . . ."

We were in the early spring, for I was on my way to Pomfret Hall, to spend the Easter recess with a good old uncle. The day was waning, but as we cleared the buildings the increased daylight enabled me to obtain a more accurate idea of my fellow-travellers, on whom my thoughts (having no further distraction from without) now concentrated themselves, for community of circumstances must inevitably create a community of interests. Now, here was I, cut off from the rest of the world for the next five hours, and shut up with five persons I had never seen before, and might, probably, never see again ; and yet, during that period, our destinies were, in a certain sense, linked together ; for we were all subjected to the same possibilities and liable to be affected by the same incidents. We were all English, and too well-bred to address each other without having been previously introduced ; still even well-bred English people may *look* at each other, so as they do not abuse the privilege accorded by the king to the cat.

I think it was Voiture who, once meeting a lady of doubtful reputation in a very distinguished *salon*, was so

incredulous of the fact that he could not help fixing his eyes upon her in his desire to make sure that she really was the person he supposed.

"Monsieur," said the lady, not relishing this scrutiny, *pour cause*, "pourquoi me considérez vous ainsi?"

"Madame," replied the wit, with more presence of mind than generosity of heart, "excusez moi; je vous regarde, mais je ne vous *considère* pas."

My own observations were made for a different purpose, and were, therefore, less obtrusive; they resulted in harmless speculations, passing sketches jotted down almost unconsciously on the tablet of the mind, but, however delicately touched in, interesting, because taken from life; and to me such pictures are episodes in the volume of my own existence.

With a few (the proverb says) "happy" exceptions, we may be sure everybody has a history, more or less incidented, and why should not real people become heroes as interesting, if not more so, than the false, and generally absurd, creatures of a wild and overstrained imagination? In real life, when we know nothing of the antecedents of a man or woman, at all events we have suggestive data in the lines of the face, the expression of the countenance and figure, the action, movement, voice, and the thousand little tell-tale indications of character, calling, and general position of which they themselves take no heed,—"*vel capillus umbram suam*,"—and when I have considered these and woven with their help my little romance around its unconscious subject, I begin to wonder how near to the truth I have arrived.

I have said my fellow-travellers were five in number (they could not well have been more), and as far as I could judge they appeared to have three histories between them. I have already—perhaps not very favourably—described two of the five; of the remaining three, the two seated opposite each other on my right formed a youthful group whose social position and mutual relationship there was no mistaking. They were evidently recently married, and in the midst of their honeymoon. Both were attired with care, if not with elegance, and all their belongings wore, like themselves, a budding, unfledged aspect; a rawness, a newness, a brightness; an unsoiled, unworn, undisillusioned air, betokening a belief in men and things; refreshing—aye, more than refreshing—to behold; for that confiding, unsuspecting trustfulness once shaken, its brilliancy is gone—

“And this, departed once, returns
No more again no more !”

There was much temptation to speculate whether on the past, the present, or the future of this young pair,—mere boy and girl entering into life,—life, synonymous in their estimation with joy, and love, and hope—to form a home and a nursing-nest for coming lives, just as, a few years before, a previous couple, as young, as joyous, as hopeful, had built up all the machinery for theirs. There they were, starting together with the budding year, from the flowery threshold of life, just as the spring

“Came forth, her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing.”

They held each other fondly by the hand now, and looked into the transparent azure of each other's eyes, as if they desired no other heaven. Would they always walk thus, side by side, hand in hand, heart to heart? How long would that confiding grasp remain firm, and on which side would it relax first? It was difficult to imagine that eyes looking on each other with so much tenderness could ever live to

" forget the loving ray
They wore in courtship's smiling day,"



still less that they could ever flash with jealousy, hatred, and revenge. Yet, how many couples who began their career like this, have come to petition for a separation in the Divorce Court!

Or supposing, as indeed we feel we may, that so dire

a lot may never be theirs, and that they should continue true to each other to the end; that they should

“Love on through all ills, and love on till they die,”—

happy, comparatively, as may be this fate, yet is it but sorrow and separation still! “Love on till they die” sounds plausible enough, and makes a pretty line; but what is its true meaning? Alas! we must experience, to appreciate it. People don’t “die” *together*, and, as another poet has said, if more severely, yet also more truthfully—

“ When such friends part,
’Tis the *survivor* dies.”

Of this loving, beaming young pair, is it the fine, manly youth, or the blushing, blooming girl, of to-day, who is to be the weeping, sorrowing, comfortless mourner of some coming winter’s night—a long, long night, on which no morning will ever break in this world;—a dreary succession of seasons—“all winters;” for the springs of these solitary years will be without hope, and their summers without sunshine.

May be, some day it will be the task of that miserable survivor to travel alone this selfsame road; to retrace, deprived of loving companionship, each step they are now taking so blissfully together. Alas! alas! How doubly gloomy will every landmark appear when it starts up in mockery as a bitter memorial of what has been, but never, never, can be more!

“Why, dear me! what’s this?” exclaimed I to myself, as I suddenly perceived a warm unbidden drop

had fallen on my hand, and I know not whether I felt more confused at the thought that it might have been observed by others, or more anxious to veil from my own sight the contemplation of the far-off future, which imagination had unwittingly brought so near while contemplating my cheerful young neighbours. "I had better close the volume at once," continued I, still soliloquising, "since I can't behave better than this; the end will be sad enough when it comes, there is no need to forestall it;" and I changed my attitude, and transferred my thoughts as I did so to the lady on my left. Her face, which I had not before observed, might once have been handsome, for the features were finely moulded, but so puckered was it by the lines which care, anxiety, grief, and probably disappointment had drawn there, that it was difficult to say what might have been its original expression. There was a crabbedness not only in her countenance, but in her very attitude and movements—an out-of-sort-edness with the world, and even with herself: her face literally showed a family resemblance to the crumpled handle of her umbrella-stick! Scrupulously neat was she in her attire, and there seemed almost a vindictive determination in the rigid exactitude, the spotless purity, and the unruffled stiffness of the component elements of her dress; her travelling bag was prim and unworn, without being smart; her umbrella was twined up almost to the compass of a walking-stick, and was in perfect order, yet without any shine; her railway wrap was strapped and buckled so as not to show a crease, it was clean without being bright; in fact, none

of her belongings could have been new, for they seemed to have acquired a reflection of her own character, and to have contracted a singular similarity to herself. Was it my fancy, or did she enjoy a malicious pleasure in cultivating all this precision because there was no one who chose to observe or admire it? If so, it must have been the only satisfaction left in her monotonous, uncared for, dried-up existence. Poor creature! How and why had she deserved so hard a fate? And yet, alas! what a very common one; is it not that of the majority?

I again allude to the well-known proverb, "Happy the life that has no history," because I want to express my entire dissent from its purport. Given life at all, any history is better than none, or it must be a very bad history indeed, as Byron says—

"None are so desolate but something dear,
Dearer than self, possesses or possessed
A sigh, and claims the tribute of a tear."

To have had a history, at least implies that we have lived—I don't mean in the modern French fashionable *argot* sense of a "*viveur*," but that we have in a more or less practical way come into contact with our fellow-beings—have played some more or less important part in the great drama of life, and have been of more or less use in carrying out its details. It is something to feel one has been even a brick in the social fabric, when it has not been given one to become the keystone of the arch.

There are few Henry Lawrences; he is one of whom we may almost say—

“Natura lo fece, poi ruppe la stampa,”

and yet that hero chose to have written on his tomb only this:

“Here lies Henry Lawrence,
Who *tried* to do his duty.”

A noble and pathetic epitaph indeed! On the other hand, what can be more depressing, nay, more mortifying, than the retrospect of an unfulfilled existence? To feel that we have had opportunities and have missed them; that we had talents which have never been called into requisition; capabilities unrecognised; powers uninvoked; gifts unappreciated. To have seen others, obviously our inferiors, continually preferred before us, because we were modest and retiring, while they were forward and pushing; to feel that, all our lives through, by some unaccountable fatality, we have been snubbed by those to whom we were vastly superior, whether in wealth, birth, or cultivation; slighted by those whom we ourselves had helped to raise; neglected by those on whose gratitude and consideration we had the strongest claim; overlooked by those whose lives we might have had the ineffable joy of making happy: to have led, in fact, a negative existence which leaves behind it no traces of satisfaction either to ourselves or others. All this suggests a melancholy issue, and yet how many there are among us who, if you asked them, would not tell you that such has been their lot; that there would

seem to have been a twist in their career so that, do what they would, all seemed to go hopelessly and helplessly wrong; that although the elements of happiness were all within their lives, and often tantalisingly within their reach, their eyes and hands seemed holden by some invisible but resistless power, so that they had never been able to grasp, to combine, or enjoy them.

Is not this one of the most inexplicable mysteries of life? How many who are gifted with God's richest talents have had to endure the bitter mortification of seeing themselves *compelled* to bury them in a napkin for lack of the opportunity they vainly sought to fructify and improve them, while, at the same time, how many, to whom the lustre of those same gifts would have been invaluable could they but have been brought within their influence, have deeply mourned the want of their help. Where is the moral master-of-the-ceremonies whose care it should be to fulfil the intention of Him who created these good gifts. Is there not something altogether faulty in our social system?

Such were the thoughts that suggested themselves to me as I gazed abstractedly in the direction of the fellow-traveller on my left—such the tale that I fancied I could read in those ominous furrows which crossed her colourless face, and I was proceeding to throw my reflections into a more definite form and to invest them with the personality of "Miss Scrooby," for such I perceived was the name on her travelling bag, when the train began suddenly to slacken and she proceeded in a measured and perfectly self-possessed way, to collect her properties.

Her demeanour was frigid, I ought to say *frozen*, for doubtless her warmer sympathies had withered under the blighting effects of neglect and indifference; whatever the cause, it was clear that, now, she deprecated the courtesies she would once have prized; it would, therefore, have been impertinent to offer her any assistance; the train drew up, and in another moment the reserved, subdued, middle-aged gentlewoman had passed away like an apparition; carrying with her her pent-up griefs and silent sorrows, none the less trying because undisburdened, un-displayed, unventilated, unshared! The guard passed by and shut to the door as if to mark the close of that chapter in the history of my journey.



It was re-opened by a handsome gentlemanly young fellow laden with the various component items of a woman's hand-luggage: rugs, bags, handboxes, baskets, cloaks—to do her justice, there was no canary-bird; but I had hardly notified my inward approval of this forbearance, when I perceived, peeping from a softly lined basket, the head of a tiny spaniel which it was clear was to make a seventh in the carriage. The fair owner of all these objects appeared close behind, as the youth exclaimed:

"There's room in this carriage, Lina dear; a nice snug corner where you'll be able to sleep comfortably, you and Prince." And with this he proceeded to help in a young and ladylike girl, slight and graceful, and dressed in deep mourning, and then handed in, one after another, all her traps and her wraps, depositing little "King Charles," doubtless a souvenir of his choice, tenderly in her lap.

"Thank you, thank you, Harry," said she in a low, musical voice. "It is very nice to have had you with me all this way; Good-bye," she added with warmth, as he took her hand between both of his, and each looked at the other, and then furtively at us, with a meaning it was not difficult to interpret. She blushed and said no more, while Harry contented himself with adding encouragingly "Keep up a good heart, dear, and be sure you let me know everything."

The merciless whistle shrieked out its sharp and unmistakable noise, and her soft reply was lost in its discordant yell. Another moment, and they were parted—who could say for how long? She waved her hand, and the tears that started to her eyes said more eloquently than the words she could not utter, all he cared to know.



They are not brother and sister, said I to myself, or that kiss would have passed which was only imagined; besides, I continued, he had no crape on his hat, and "Lina" is in the deepest black. "Lina," I resumed; he

called her "Lina;" I wonder what it is the abbreviation for; Emmeline, or Eveline, or Etheline? Caroline? Rosaline? There are so many pretty names ending in "Line."

It was not long, however, before I discovered that the name of my charming travelling companion was none of these: attached to the strap of her railway-rug was a luggage label, addressed—

Miss Adeline Morton,
Lady Jones,
Crofton Grange.

"Morton?"—mused I. "I wonder what Morton: can it be one of the Vernon Mortons?—not impossible, she is evidently a gentlewoman, and has all the appearance of being a young woman of good birth; while, if I am not mistaken, her demeanour tells a tale of sadness and reverse."

"Lady Jones"—I continued, "who can *she* be? No doubt the wife of some civic dignitary knighted and benighted: dubbed 'Sir Somebody Jones' because some foreign Prince visited the Mansion House during his mayoralty; rich and vulgar no doubt is Lady Jones, and so this poor, pale, delicate but courageous girl is on her way to Crofton Grange, to assume the hard and thankless duties of companion to Lady Jones, or, perhaps, governess to her underbred children; and the price of her liberty during the few fleeting years of her girlhood is, no doubt, destined to support a sick and widowed mother and help to educate a family of fatherless young sisters.

What a melancholy fate, thought I, as I looked on Adeline's refined face, and studied the gentle, truthful expression of her soft brown eyes, the innocence of her clear and polished brow, and the silky hair her fond father's hand should stroke no more. What a pity that such a girl should be doomed to the most abject and humiliating kind of obscurity, to breathe the backstairs atmosphere of a *parvenu's* narrow world, to be sneered at by the servants, snubbed by the family, slighted by the guests, and, perhaps, insulted by the master. Alas! poor Adeline Morton! no wonder you look serious; yet you have one bright ray of sunshine gleaming across your path; the true love of an honest man is yours; for I am sure "Harry" loves you devotedly, lastingly, and truthfully, and the recollection of his fine open countenance, as it looked on you when you parted, will be a secret but sustaining solace for you to fall back upon when your employers and those who surround you in your new position—for I will not call it home—fail to appreciate you. Yes, you can afford to let the world think, and even say, what it pleases of you and treat you as it lists, so long as you remain true to yourself and worthy of him.

Adeline had sunk back in her snug corner as if in obedience to Harry's thoughtful suggestion, and those large lustrous eyes of hers were concealed by the closed lids and long dark fringing lashes; her ungloved left hand lay half hidden in the long black silken hair of the small spaniel whose blue ribbon was twisted round her wrist; on the fourth finger might be discerned a tasteful little

ring—the seal, no doubt, of her betrothal—bearing a trefoil, formed of three small stones—a ruby, an emerald, and a brilliant; there could be no doubt *this* was Harry's gift—his parting token, perhaps—a graceful ornament enhanced rather by its emblematical significance than its intrinsic worth, and more dearly prized by the true-hearted wearer than the costly triple hoops presented to their *fiancées* by wealthier bridegrooms and worn oftener, perhaps, from affectation than affection.

Adeline Morton was, as I have said, calmly sleeping, and no doubt her pure and holy dreams rescued her, for a time at least, from the contemplation of her dubious fate; but she was not the only one who slumbered: on looking round me, I perceived that the other six inmates of the carriage (including the lap-dog) had dropped off, as if by mesmeric influence,—all, save one, and that one was my sinister-visaged opposite neighbour who, to my wonder and dismay, sat with fixed eyes, ghastly to behold, silently, but attentively, watching my minutest movements from beneath the shelter of his broad-brimmed hat. Was *he* weaving *my* story?—Oh, dear no. As I looked up, on making this singular and inexplicable discovery, our eyes necessarily met, but without in the least abashing him; on the contrary, he kept his fixed upon mine as if he would look me through and through. I confess I did not at all relish giving him the advantage over me, and determined, on my part, not to lose sight of *him*. When this had lasted some minutes, it was impossible not to feel that a crisis was imminent; the only question was, which of us would speak first; for it was evident one

must. I had not long to wait: casting a hurried glance around him, to assure himself and signify to me, that we were, to all intents and purposes, alone, he put his face close to mine and said between his teeth, with an expression of suppressed rage not easy to forget,—“Do you see *this*?”

At the same time, he opened his cloak and showed me that he held between his knees a six-barrelled revolver, which he at the same time cocked, while he pointed it upwards at my head.



—“Now,” said he in a hoarse whisper, “stir, if you dare, for your first move shall be your last; I’ve charges enough left for the others, if you venture to alarm them, and I can settle their business after I’ve done with you. You thought you’d managed it very cleverly, sneak-

ing about till you found out the train I was to escape by, and then pursuing me from carriage to carriage, you infernal spy! Don’t you wish you could get your hand into your pocket and pull out those elegant bracelets you generously intend for me? Ha-ha! if you could but have clasped them round my wrists, our relative

positions would be slightly different ; but then, you see, you haven't ;" and he grinned horribly.

I was so thunderstruck by the tone, the expression of countenance, and the attitude of my adversary, and, above all, by the attack thus unexpectedly and unprovokedly opened upon me that, I was utterly at a loss what to make of it or how to meet it, and I was fain to let him go on with his taunts, not only because completely perplexed, but because I felt myself utterly defenceless and in considerable peril. There was the ruffian, and in his hands, trembling with vindictive fury against the detective his guilty fears had conjured up and invested with my personality, a loaded revolver, cocked, and his finger on the trigger. His own words implied that he was an escaped criminal or lunatic, or both, and in a sudden ebullition of passion or even through a sudden jerk in the movement of the train, a charge might, without further warning, be lodged in my head. The predicament was uncommonly awkward, and was becoming every moment more untenable ; the windows were all up, the atmosphere was close and oppressive, I would have given anything for a breath of fresh air, but I occupied a middle seat, and feared either to move or speak.

On, on, on, sped the carriage, the same weary, changeless vibration ; the same recurring succession of monotonous sounds ; the same ceaseless revolution of wheels, pitchy darkness without, dim, unsteady semi-obscurity within, no possible communication with my fellow-travellers, no relief from my embarrassing, not to say

cruel, situation: I thought of those who say they love an adventure, and heartily wished I could shift this one off my shoulders on to theirs.

I could not undertake to say how long this had lasted, for, if ever time moved with leaden wings, it was during that fearful stage. I was so terror-stricken that I began to tremble in every limb, and I felt if the strain were imposed much longer it would be beyond endurance, and that, happen what might, I should risk the attempt of collaring the fellow and waking my companions. Suddenly a complication arose—any change would have been a relief—I became conscious, for I could only see straight before me, that the woman who accompanied my foe was not now asleep, and was also observing me; I felt sure, now, that she was aware of all that had passed, and I began to wonder whether she was there against her will or whether it was a case of abduction to which she was a consenting party. Just at this moment, a loud snore from the youth on my right followed by a movement indicative of waking brought with it a joy no words can describe, when, for the first time, those terrible orbs relaxed their gaze and turned in the direction of the sound; it was, however, but for a moment, still it sufficed to afford me a glance at the young woman who, I now saw, was making unmistakable signs to me, but with what intention it was impossible for me to divine, for the sleeper rolled himself round once more and was soon as soundly asleep as before; I was more puzzled than ever. My tormentor turned upon his companion a rapid and scrutinising glance which she contrived thoroughly to

baffle, and he once more resumed his jealous vigilance over myself.

My nerves were by this time so over-wrought that I was on the verge of desperation and knew not what might have followed had not at that instant a second welcome sound made my heart bound at the prospect of release: it was the piercing shriek of the signal-whistle that came like sweetest music to my ears. The unlooked-for reprieve of the condemned criminal on the scaffold can alone be likened to it; long and shrill-ly it blew, and while I held my breath in mingled hope and dread of the possible consummation to this mute but terrible conflict, the train drew up and we came to a standstill. The guard opened the door, exclaiming in a loud voice—

“All passengers alight here.”

In an instant I was on my feet, ready with my appeal, but the official had passed on.

My first impulse was to rush after him, and great was my surprise not to find myself held back by my tormentor; I turned round to see what he was about, and what was my astonishment to find myself—alone!

What had become of my fellow-passengers, all just now so soundly asleep in the corners? All gone! and yet I felt sure no one had passed me, not even the spaniel. How, in the name of wonder, had they got out? I seated myself once more to collect my thoughts, the guard passed back along the platform, this time shutting the doors of the now empty carriages; on reaching mine, he called out once more, apparently addressing myself in particular, “All passengers change here,” and then he

added, "You'll have to make haste, sir, or you'll miss the train." "Train!" said I, "what train,—where are they all gone? Where are we?"

"Where are we!" said the man, echoing my words and evidently not understanding my rapid, and to him incoherent, inquiries, "why, at York, to be sure, and

you're likely to stay there, too, if you don't look sharper than this," and he hastily possessed himself of my bag and umbrella and hurried on expecting me to follow him.



"York!" I exclaimed, "York! What does it all mean? Why, then, we must have passed Selby ever so long ago, while that confounded fellow was

holding a pistol to my throat, and . . . Oh! I see it all now, and thank Heaven it's no worse. I've been the victim of a horrid dream!" and shall I not say of this episode,—which I can laugh at now,—borrowing the words of the Cordovese philosopher—

". . . . Quod fuit durum pati,
Meminisse dulce est."

I don't mean to say that all this might as well have happened in an omnibus journey, because that is a much briefer, simpler, more commonplace affair; but even that in its small way has its proportionate little romances, and every omnibus that rolls along the pavement contains

for those who can and who care to read the mixed volume of human nature, a chapter—nay, twelve chapters—of that strange, complex and mysterious history, opened out for their speculation.

It is, *in limine*, a curious and suggestive phase of modern civilisation, which brings during a certain space of time, a dozen fellow-beings into close and compact—sometimes too close and too compact, association: and yet, though they have, for the time, a common purpose, and are sharing many inevitable and some unexpected contingencies, not one of them—though of the same class—ever thinks of addressing any other unless quite by exception or under pressure of some unusual incident; moreover, this reticence is so entirely understood that it has no discourteous signification but rather the reverse; indeed, it could not, in a large and mixed community, be otherwise. Still it is one form in which we realise to ourselves that striking remark of the Rev. John Joachim Becher, the guardian and also the guide, philosopher and friend of Lord Byron, which has been . . . well, let us say *borrowed* by Longfellow, and, with scarce an alteration in the text, thrown into hexameters:

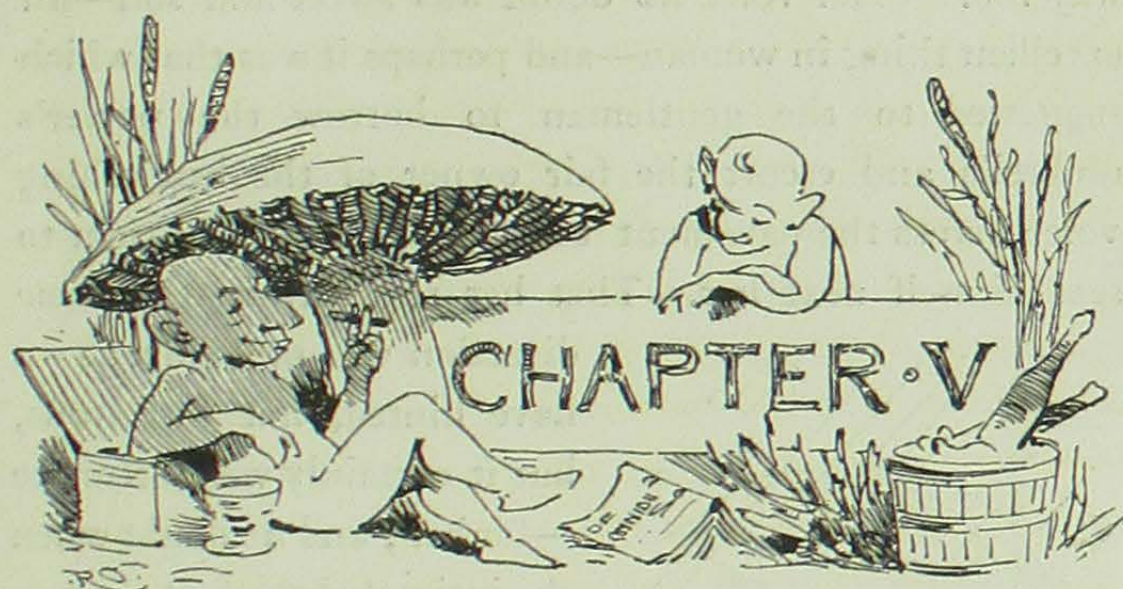
I may quote *en passant* Byron's remark that, "except money, a poet had better *borrow* anything than the thoughts of another"—but here is the passage—

"As ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal given, and a distant voice in the darkness,
So, on the ocean of life, we meet and pass one another,
Only a voice and a sound—then darkness again, and a silence!"

And what a depth of silence it sometimes is! for

although we may apply the observation to fortuitous, commonplace encounters in public carriages, we must all feel how truly it may also be said of those which take a deeper hold and exercise a more lasting influence on our lives. Volumes have sometimes been spoken in these "passing salutations;" signals reciprocally recognised, and voices heard, the tone of which we are destined nevermore to forget: then indeed the darkness which succeeds, and the solemn silence that accompanies it, cast over our remaining days a shadow which no sunshine can ever again illumine—the goodly ship has sailed beyond our strained sight and has passed out of it as a phantom; the waves have rolled over again, and have washed out its very track, and we go on asking ourselves to the end of our days—Where is that majestic and imposing vessel, and into what far-off port has she sailed?





A momentous meeting in an omnibus—Chances for the unspliced—Mixtures—Lettered men—Notabilities in omnibuses—Paris omnibuses—Ladies in and on them—Medical women—The medical wife—Relations between the sexes—Gallantry jeopardised—He-women—Proclivities and tastes and practices of the “nineteenth-century-woman”—Their results—Woman’s influence lost—Why?—Madame de Staël—More men I have met in omnibuses—The Riviera omnibus—Its passengers—Originality of ideas notwithstanding want of education—A startling announcement.

THAT a meeting which owes its origin to that humble instrument—an omnibus, *may* lead to noteworthy results I can give you a remarkable proof.

A lady and gentleman, total strangers to each other, happened one bright April afternoon to be pursuing their several ways along Piccadilly; suddenly one of those smart but refreshing showers common to that variable month overtook them, and each made for the nearest shelter, which happened to be the Burlington Arcade. While

the sky was still pouring down its blessed drops, an omnibus happened to pass, the gentleman hailed it, on which the lady remarked—perhaps she suddenly discovered it, for she was a widow—"Dear me! that's my way too." Her voice no doubt was sweet and soft—an excellent thing in woman—and perhaps it was that which suggested to the gentleman to borrow the porter's umbrella and escort the fair owner of the bewitching voice across the pavement under its shelter, and then to seat himself next her. That her road lay in the same



direction was probably, as we have hinted, not fortuitous, but it certainly was fortunate—for her; and no doubt when she intimated the fact she was inspired by the god of good luck. Be that as it may, there they sat side by side; they were going on without knowing it, to meet their fate, and along with it the fates of a great many other people, for

the gentleman (*he* was a widower) was father of a family and a man of colossal fortune—the lady, so fascinating in her tell-tale weeds, was colossal only in dimensions, but it is presumable she knew how to make these dimensions attractive, for he ascertained her address and called the next day to learn how she fared after the shower (as if she had never had a sprinkling since her baptism! but that was so long ago she might fairly have

forgotten it): the acquaintance was thus gradually "cemented," and in due time the old gentleman, who was only on the look-out for an opportunity to show himself independent of his children, sought the fair creature's co-operation in carrying out this amiable idea. She did not hesitate very long, and a marriage very shortly after took place: neither turtle-dove had any time to lose. It was by a singular stroke of good fortune that that very opportune omnibus went by and happened to have just the two inside places vacant! Say, after that, you don't believe in luck! I do, though I never had any personal experience of it. I am like that other party who always courted Fortune, but the old lady persistently sent him her daughter! However, as I believe myself to be exceptionally unlucky, and unlikely to get spliced in this way, I strongly advise my fair readers, be they maids or widows, to try their chances in matrimony, by hailing every omnibus that passes: nothing venture, nothing win: they may each, at last, hit upon one that is carrying a wealthy widower on the look-out for No. 2. To proceed—If there be wealthy widowers and other desirable acquaintances to be met in omnibuses, there are also sometimes undesirable fellow-passengers. *Omnibus hoc vitium est*, which I suppose must mean that even omnibuses have this fault; but, *Hélas! que voulez vous?* if you will invade the carriage and pair of the people you must take the disadvantages with the benefits and strike a balance. There are mixtures in all gatherings, and sometimes they are provokingly the wrong way up. Mr. P—— the tailor is

said to have complained that once being invited to a large party at the house of a noble client (who didn't always pay ready-money), he "found a great mixture there."

"Well, Mr. P——," replied the addressee, "you couldn't expect 'em to be *all* tailors."

Obviously Mr. P—— intended superciliously to imply that this *méli-mélo* comprised an undue proportion of the plebeian element; now I really think that if an omnibus census were established, we should find nearly as many patricians as plebeians among their frequenters; many, therefore, owners of private carriages.

I know a wealthy "city-man"—the term is vague, I admit, but less so than "something in the city," so I employ it in preference; but he really is very wealthy and has carriages of his own, which are mostly used by his wife and daughters and friends,—now *he* never goes to or returns from that financial and commercial centre by any other conveyance, and always prefers the outside.

I may affirm that I have met many individuals of note during my omnibus journeys, who do not disdain the conveyance. I have sat cheek by jowl not merely with citizens of credit and renown, but with distinguished members of the liberal professions, and with men sporting handles to their names; with authors (I naturally give precedence to authors), politicians, statesmen; with officers (not police) of high grade, and knights—but these are being produced so rapidly that we shall soon have more knights than days—and with baronets; with peers *in futuro*—I mean when the peerage was more select and less metallic

than at present—with K.C.B.'s, C.B.'s, and men in office as busy as bees; with M.D.'s (female; the conventional physician has his carriage with the stereotyped horses, trained to look jaded), with M.P.'s, J.P.'s, A.S.S.'s, and men with no end of letters after their names. Some people have a weakness for this sort of comet's tail. I knew an excellent fellow who was bitten with this harmless *rabies*. So ambitious was he of placing himself on a footing of equality with the lettered public, that he couldn't see (no more can I) why he shouldn't adopt some of these coveted affixes. He accordingly gratified himself first with the much abused and much usurped Esq., "which, as you know," he said, "everybody takes now," and beyond this he wrote after his humble patronymic of "Smuggs" the following imposing list of capitals: M.S.D.H.P.D.C.

One day I ventured to ask him what all this stood for. "Oh, it's all quite right," said he, "I wouldn't assume any 'distinction' I don't come honestly by, and being Manager of the Suburban Daily and Hourly Parcels Delivery Company, I am unable to express my 'style and title' more briefly."

But to continue my list, I have shared the omnibus cushion with clergymen, Catholic and Protestant, and once found myself there in the honoured company of an ecclesiastical dignitary who has since deservedly become much more celebrated than he was even then. My attention was drawn to his imposing presence by the whispered dialogue of two young women, one of whom pointed him out by name to her companion.

"Well, and what if it is," rejoined she, under her breath, "you needn't stare at him so."

"Yes, I may," replied the first, "he's a caratter, he expects to be stared at."

Once I travelled in an omnibus with the fair Gèneviève Ward, indeed, more than once have I staged it with stage professionals; once with Doctress Mary Walker (I consider she-doctors entitled to this distinctive nomenclature); another time with the grim and grisly old "philosopher" (as he contrived to get himself styled) of Chelsea; though, without denying his remarkable qualities, I can't think he was, *practically*, much of a philosopher; he wrote like one, but doesn't seem to me to have lived like one. He carried a gnarled stick, with a gnarled knob, very much like his own gnarled face, and I thought as I looked at that, how very much I should like to know what was going on in the cavity behind it. On another occasion, I found myself with a statesman by no means indifferent to popularity, and from his manner I judged he must be a frequent patroniser of the popular carriage. Perhaps he indulged in Haroun al Raschid's propensities—any way no doubt he had his reasons. Once I travelled with a learned and much esteemed professor from the British Museum, kindly and genial, notwithstanding his intellectual superiority, and accessible, though exalted on a lofty pillar of his own rearing. Twice I have found myself next to lords spiritual (before they got into lawn), bishops in embryo. One of these, while yet a London rector, was wont to say and probably to

believe,* that "if St. Peter were to come on earth, the only church his saintship would approve, would be that of St. —s," meaning the one of which he was incumbent. He afterwards became bishop of an important see, and later on enjoyed the benefit of translation, Swift having very justly observed that "everything loses by translation except a bishop." This same bishop I found most amusing company; I must add that I already knew him, and we therefore had a chat, in the course of which, happening to revert to the earlier portion of his career, when holding a rural cure, he told me some droll stories; one was *apropos*



* I have heard an amusing anecdote of an ecclesiastical dignitary's truthfulness which some of you may perhaps recognise.

My story tells of a group of labourers sitting dining under a hedge, when a bishop (I needn't state which) passed by. As they were rather vociferous in their talk, and might possibly have been quarrelling, his lordship thought it his duty *not* to pass by on the other side, and approaching them asked what it was that made them so earnest.

"Well, sir," said one, "it's just this; we was a-digging when we came upon this ere copper kettle, and as we couldn't say rightly which of us it was as found it, we was a-going to draw lots for it, when one chap says, says he; 'Suppose we give it to the one as can tell the best lie.' 'Done,' says we, 'and so now we're a-telling lies just for fun, and to see who's to win it.'"

The bishop looked grave, and considering the opportunity to be seized on, he replied, "I think drawing lots would have been the preferable plan; we should *never* tell lies even in jest; why, I never told a lie in my life." I am sorry to say a loud laugh interrupted the bishop's admonition, amid which the spokesman called out: "That'll do, give 'im the kettle, Bill, he's fairly won it; we can't none on us beat that if we tried all day."

of the difficulty of collecting lawful fees, which the more ignorant of country parishioners do not seem to understand go to make up the parson's income, and they therefore not only grudge the payment of them, but shirk it whenever they can. One instance he gave me was that of a very well-to-do farmer, who came to church to be married for the second time. When they arrived at that rubric of the marriage service which directs that "the ring shall be laid upon the book, with the accustomed duty to the priest and clerk," the intending husband simply produced the ring, diplomatically ignoring all the rest. "You have forgotten the fee," whispered his reverence, keeping his finger on the rubric and assuming, albeit courteously, the attitude of a man who means to wait for his answer; the fellow looked up, and seeing the parson was in earnest, produced the fee and laid it down sulkily beside the ring: "*That*," once more whispered his reverence, "will do for last time; now for this time," and he continued to point to his authority. Of course the bridegroom felt he was in a cleft stick, and though he again obeyed, it was somewhat more gracelessly than before. Probably that man consoled himself with the thought that *next* time there would be no arrears to pay up. Another of his tales which I remember also related to a celebration of the marriage service. This time, when the bride held out her finger to receive the ring, the clergyman perceived she already wore one, and inquired how that happened, to which the bridegroom replied in a grumpy tone, "It's a widder." On this, he requested the first ring might be removed, if not altogether, at least

to another finger, and quietly explained the symbolism. I don't suppose he quoted de Musset—

“C'est un serpent doré que l'anneau conjugal.”

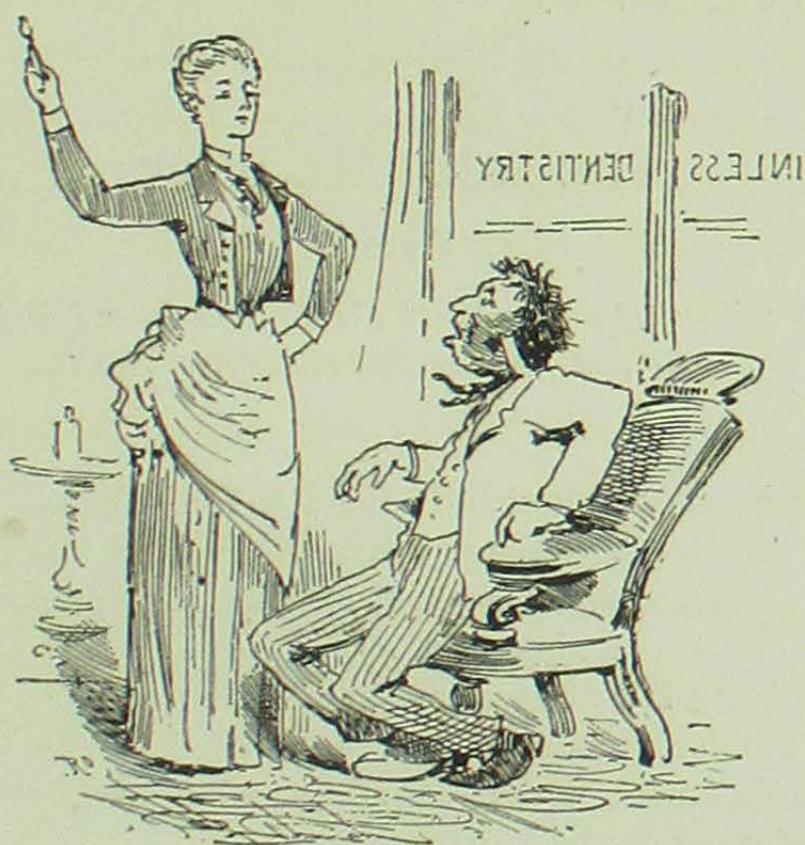
My other bishop, who I understand owed his preferment to the lucky chance of his having been the school-fellow of Sir Robert Peel, was also very entertaining, but I can only recall one of his anecdotes, which referred to his observation, that almost throughout the county of Dorsets, there were to be found two figures respectively of Moses and Aaron on either side of the communion table, under the two tablets of the commandments, that that of Moses was always habited in top boots, and he carried a riding-whip. On one occasion his right rev. lordship begged an explanation of the reason for this attire from an old sexton who was showing him over a church. The old fellow looked puzzled and scratched his head, but, not to be found at fault, he replied, “Well, sir, I can't say as I rightly know, but I'm quite sure if Moses ever did come to these 'ere parts, he couldn't a got over our roads without top-boots, a riding-whip, and a horse besides.” Twice I have travelled in a London 'bus with the G.O.M.—Grand old mystifier, meddler, muddler, mischief-maker (since, for very solid and very sad reasons, styled M.O.G.), and once again he was my fellow-traveller, but that was *not* in England, perched on the knife-board. In Paris, I have travelled outside omnibuses with ladies—ay, ladies of rank and position; though not so very long before then even a child *du sexe* was not allowed to mount to that questionable elevation; but

under King Grévy I. *nous avons changé tout cela*, and the Paris omnibus is now provided with a convenient staircase, which ladies may be seen ascending and descending with as much ease and grace as those other angels whom even the favoured Jacob was only allowed to behold in a dream. The custom has of course now crossed the Channel. That there is, at least, one class of persons who do not object to the new order of things we may gather from the remark of a susceptible and gallant *conducteur*. Shortly before conventionality had sanctioned the occupation of the knife-board by ladies, one of these was complaining of the hardship of being stuffed inside like a cow in a cattle-truck, instead of mounting to the breezier seats outside.

"*Hélas ! que voulez-vous, Madame ?*" replied the conductor with the expressive French shrug, "*ce n'est pas de notre faute, ce sont nous autres qui y perdons.*"

Now is it the influence of independent young ladies from the States ; emancipated, cigar-smoking, horse-whipping women from England generally, and "sweet girl-graduates" from the universities particularly (*alias* he-women), who have brought about this change in European taste ? or are these little social revolutions in France only the natural result of the communardic spirit which must needs tend to establish *liberté* and *égalité* in all things, so that distinctions not only of rank and fortune have to be swept away, but sex itself bids fair to be soon a thing of the past ? The fact of the matter is, there are too many women in the world ; they really are in each others' way for one thing, and for another, the excess of their number over that of men, renders them too cheap and

men too independent. It is only in this way that we can account for the eagerness with which the sex itself is combining to diminish its own numbers by trying to turn the superfluous ones into men: by this means the number of she-women left may be found to bring the sexes to a fair proportion. Unhappily on quitting the attributes of their own, and assuming those of the other,



they only succeed in forming a third or hybrid sex equally dissimilar and distasteful to both.

As to medical women, if there be, among men, certain who encourage, admire, and even marry them, there assuredly is a vast majority equally eager to avoid their company: it may console European and American doctresses to reflect that they are no longer singular in pursuing the practice of medicine; the she-medical

profession now counts its members among the Parsis, "where," says their historian Karaca, "women study anatomy side by side with male tyros."

Some years ago, when a learned female M.D. had met with an admirer not unwilling to let her make him Dr. Eliza ——'s husband, I one day fell in with the following ridiculous parody of "The Musical Wife," set to appropriate music.

THE MEDICAL WIFE.

SONG

*Dedicated without permission to the Bachelors and Widowers of
the British Empire and the United States.*

I.

I'm the queerest of husbands, the wife I have chose
The practice of physic pursues,
There are not many men would have dared to propose,
Nor be standing, just now, in my shoes.
Our wedding I'm told was the talk of the town,
My position's unique, as you see ;
For if other men's wives wear a cap and a gown,
They're not got by a doctor's degree.
O beware, ye young men, of a medical wife,
For Eliza's M.D. is the plague of my life.

2.

Our card-plate's a puzzle, for who shall decide
In what form our joint-names should appear ?
Hers, I fear, must stand first, and mine on the wrong side,
Why at me all the flunkies will jeer !
The tables are turned—she is Darby, I'm Joan,
"Professional duties," you see,

Can always be urged in an absolute tone,
 I daren't refuse e'en a latch-key !
 O beware, &c.

3.

We sit down to breakfast—when lo ! an express
 Comes to summon “the Doctor” away,
I must needs brew the tea, and of course make a mess,
 But anomalies go on all day.



At night 'tis still worse, there's the surgery-bell
 Every minute is given to ring,
 And although very often it's only a sell,
 Still it might be a serious thing.
 O beware, &c.

4.

Says the Doctor when starting her patients to see,
 “My dear love, you have got a sad cough,

A prescription I'll write when I come home to tea,
Meantime—I've some legs to cut off."
When at table, it's true, I declare on my life
I oft feel myself quite in the way,
There's such technical talk 'twixt my guests and my wife,
That I try to ignore what they say.
O beware, &c.

5.

Study's all very well, but then everyday life
Must provided for be, as you know,
Yet just before lunch, my professional wife
To a clinical lecture must go !
On *my* shoulders now fall all the household affairs,
All the tradespeople's books come to me ;
Though I wedded t' escape all these housekeeping cares,
Such are now the sole books that I see.
O beware, &c.

6.

But there'll come certain duties as time toddles on,
That she can't well by proxy achieve,
And how busy soe'er our small daughter or son
She *must* stay at home to receive.
How she'll manage things then 'tis not easy to say,
Nor yet what with the babe *I'm* to do,
When his ma to her patients must start at mid-day
And his next feeding-time is at two.
O beware, &c.

7.

I see other men with their charming she-wives,
Whose homes like a paradise shine,
Alas ! don't I envy their commonplace lives !
And there's no doubt how they look on mine.
Now when you for a prize matrimonial compete,
Be warned by a desperate man,

And if ever a surgeon in skirts you should meet,
 Run away, friends, as fast as you can,
 O ! beware, ye young men, of all medical wives,
 Let no female M.D.'s be the plagues of your lives.



Alas! when I revert to the gallantry of my youthful days, and remember the pride and alacrity with which I watched for occasions to pay delicate little attentions to my sisters, cousins, and *even* to other young ladies not related to me at all—I weep at the woful change that has come over the spirit of my juvenile dream; I knew there would be changes, but never did I anticipate such as have taken place! The poetry of life is gone! Chivalry, Romance, where are ye? That I should survive to hear young men counselled to shun the presence of lovely woman—alas! no longer lovely! no longer weak and stronger in that weakness than man in his strength! It would seem “she thought

“That God had made her much amiss,
 And tried to make herself anew,”—

and a nice mess she has made of it!

How is it that sweet and charming sex has lost the

sentiment of its sweetness and of its charm, and at the same time the secret by which these are maintained—its graceful reticence, its attractive modesty, that confiding dependence, in itself an eloquent appeal to the strength given to man to respond to it? Can it have become necessary to point out by referring to all tradition, whether sacred or profane, all experience, all natural feeling—I might add all natural history—that woman is the complement of man, and not his double, his counterpart, and not his copy, his *protegée*, and not his rival? We know that neither sex is complete without the other, that one supplies what the other wants, and that the two combined constitute a perfect and harmonious whole; if, mistaking this view, not only so plainly expressed in sacred writ, but so obviously proclaimed by Nature herself, we subvert all law and order, and try—I say ‘try,’ for how does it succeed?—to make men and women *alike*, what becomes of all the contrivances of the Creator to make them different? what of the irresistible impulses universally recognised, what of that chivalry, the most elevating sentiment of our nature? And how cruelly are all the softer influences dispelled as we discover the harsh and repulsive fact that women are deliberately *competing* with men!

The present attitude of woman would almost justify that version of the Bible which states that Adam, as soon as he saw his wife, declared “She shall be called *Virago*.”

It cannot but be plain that life is a series of mutual obligations and responsibilities—

“I slept, and dreamed that life was beauty;
I woke, and found that life was duty”—

and the sooner we wake and find that out the better, the next step being for each to accept severally that which falls to his and her share; for the respective duties of the sexes are very distinctively marked out and pretty equally distributed between them. It seems incredible therefore that women should deliberately repudiate this reciprocity and set to work to do their little best towards subverting the whole human economy, creating false positions and making hideous discord where there should be the softest and sweetest harmony. Do we not see them applying themselves to professions, occupations, and studies adapted not to their own capacity but to that of men; assuming duties and obligations which not only take them out of their own sphere of usefulness, but imply an usurpation of positions—as all false positions must be—alike ungraceful and ungrateful to themselves? for what is success, what is beauty, but the fitness of things. Such women seem slow to perceive that by thrusting themselves thus prominently before the world and challenging public opinion they surrender that armour of softness and modesty, the invincible panoply of their sex:—

ἀντ' ἐγγέων ἀπάντων
 ἀντ' ἀσπίδων ἀπασῶν,
 νίκη δὲ καὶ σίδηρον
 καὶ πῦρ καλὴ τις οὔσα.

The dependence of one sex has always triumphed over the strength of the other, by its mute appeal to the generosity of the more vigorous character. There is not a poet, nor what is more to the purpose, an historian, who does not tell how

“——too convincing, dangerously dear
In woman's eye's the unanswerable tear:—
That weapon of her weakness she can wield
To save, subdue,—at once her spear and shield ”—

Yes, this was so,—once; but now! where are we? Women no longer captivate by their tenderness, win by their gentleness, or rule by their submission; so far from cultivating those irresistible charms of their character, they come out in these days as a sort of unsexed nondescript, a man on a smaller and punier scale—a shockingly bad imitation of the real thing which they caricature, making the object they ape as ridiculous as themselves.

Speaking of Voltaire and the “school” which presumed to term him “a shallow fellow,” Byron says “the whole of their contemptible trash of Epics, Excursions, &c., is not worth those three words—‘ZAÏRE, VOUS PLEUREZ!’ ”

The ambition of the nineteenth-century-woman is not to discover and define the standard of perfection of her own sex and aim at attaining it, not to win man and exercise a purifying influence over husband and sons by the cultivation of her mind, but shutting out the very sight of that goal and abandoning her own path, to strike across to his and try to beat him in his distinct and separate course. It is thus that she has invented the questionable novelty of the university-woman and graduates like a man; she already practises one or two of the “liberal professions,” and will no doubt in time attempt them all; she talks like a man, dresses her head and her person (as much as she can) like a man, smokes like a

man, and will probably soon cross her horse like one. I have often wondered what would happen if when a nineteenth-century-woman should be walking down Regent Street one night on her way from her club (they have clubs, you know,) she were assaulted by a rough; it would be absurd for any he-man to rush to her rescue, though if she still wore a petticoat that would of course be his instinctive impulse, but (as she has her own views of "women's rights" and has established her equality or she would not be there) why should any man take up her defence on the score of physical helplessness which she does not admit?

And yet what a brutalising effect on the morals of the age if it became an understood rule that no man was henceforth to take the liberty of defending any woman from insult, or of



rescuing her in an accident, because the chances are she is an *émancipée* who would resent his interference and perhaps knock him down for his presumption: of course he could call her out if she did, and it would be extremely illogical if any member of society should take it amiss. It has been remarked of late—and no wonder—that even in the roughest weather it is in vain a fair creature, backed by the conductor, appeals, im-

personally of course, to the gentlemen within his 'bus as to whether one of them will "ride outside to oblige a lady,"—they are all seized with sudden deafness, and seem to think that the women of our day must be as well able to battle with the elements as themselves. The mother of the Gracchi was an heroic woman, but she parted with no attribute of her sex when she vaunted as the only jewels that became a Roman mother the manliness, the courage, and the patriotism of her sons.

Madame de Staël seems to have been a "he-woman" somewhat in advance of the age; but she didn't win much admiration from the other sex. It is said that Benjamin Constant was one day asked, should he find himself in the water with Madame de Staël and Madame de Récamier, which would he try to save?—"Mais, mon Dieu! Madame de Récamier; Madame de Staël sait tant de choses que sans doute elle sait aussi nager." And yet Madame de Récamier was one of the most cultivated women of her time.

One more allusion to men I have met in omnibuses; it was some years ago, and I was, I remember, in an Islington 'bus. Among the passengers I noticed a well-dressed man seated near the door, and gallantly assisting the ladies in and out. Presently he alighted, when the conductor put his head in at the door, remarking with what might have passed for a chuckle—

"I daresay, ladies and gentlemen, you might like to know who that there gent was as 'as just got down."

Heads, especially bonneted ones, were eagerly thrust forward; whom could it be—"Bradlaugh?" "No."

"Sir Wilfrid Lawson?" "The Lord Mayor? Irving, Cetewayo, the Duke of Argyll?"

"Ah! I see you'll never guess; no, it were none o' them gentlemen—it were Mister Calcraft the hexecutor."

The individuals I have met, you will see, were all, in a sense, celebrities; I could mention others who, if less known publicly, have interested me quite as much.



During a winter at the Grand Hotel at Mentone, I constantly employed the hotel omnibus—and a very well-appointed one it was—to make my trips into the town where it would drop its passengers on its way to and from the station. A stout elderly lady, an inmate of the hotel, also frequently availed herself of the opportunity, and as she and her husband had retired on a fortune realised in trade, her observations on things in general were often very amusing. The first day she arrived she remarked on the convenience of being able to "ride in a conveyance belonging to the hotel, instead of panting along the road with the chance of *inhaling* a public omnibus."

One day when there had been an exhibition of pictures in the town, to which most of the visitors had gone, I found myself beside my "fat friend" on our drive home.

"Well, Mrs. Hogpen," said I, "and what did you think of the pictures?"

"Think of 'em?" she replied, "why I consider they was very good for what they was."

"How do you mean? I believe the artists were all very fairly talented."

"Oh yes, I've no doubt, but then you see they was all originals."

"Surely that would be one of their merits."

"I don't think so; why when a man takes a clean canvas to work on, he can put on it anythink that comes into his head; but when a hartist has to *copy* a pictur' why that's quite a different thing, he's got to do exactly what the other man did, and can't halter anythink to his own fancy."

As I never looked at it in this light before, the remark appeared to me as original as ingenious; but I was still more amused during our next drive, on the day on which the late Emperor of Russia was assailed by the Nihilist plotters. The first telegram had arrived early announcing the dastardly attack, and it was on our return from the station with the letters by the later mail that one gentleman opening his paper in the omnibus, read out that the Czar was dead, adding—

"Oui, Messieurs, à huit heures du soir sa Majesté a rendu le dernier soupir."

"Well now I ham glad," burst out the good lady to the infinite surprise of all.

"Glad, Mrs. Hogpen! glad! did you say? Are you a Nihilist?"

"No, sir," she replied with warmth, "which I am not a Niliss, but I'm glad, and so ought *you* to be glad, all

the same, to think the poor soul got the last supper before he died ; oh, I hunderstand French enough for that, though *some people* may fancy they're better heddicated."

How we all kept our countenances I can't say, but I'm glad I did, because there really was no harm in the old lady, and it was far from my thoughts to hurt her feelings, she was so pathetically unconscious of her blunders.

Poor Mrs. Hogpen *did* understand French in what can only be called "a sort of a kind of a way ;" she had probably cultivated it in the interests of "business." Indeed I am not sure hers was not the identical shop into which the late Arthur Sketchley once stepped on observing the stereotyped "*Parle-Français*" notice exhibited in the window ; bent on fun, the popular wit, assuming a grave face, enquired—

"*Qui est ce qui parle Français ici ?*" on which a "young gentleman" stepped forward, bowed politely and with much originality suavely replied "*Je.*"

Be that as it may, Mrs. Hogpen's knowledge of French (as far as it went) was recognised in our hotel, so that one evening a lady in the *salon* having received one of those deeply-bordered "*lettres de faire part*" so usefully employed as domestic announcements in Continental society, she passed it across to Mrs. Hogpen, remarking—

"This may perhaps interest you, it relates to those agreeable French people whose acquaintance we made here at the beginning of the season ; they have had a sad loss."

Mrs. Hogpen took the formidable-looking document and turned it over as persons usually do who see and

handle something remarkable for the first time, then she proceeded to peruse the contents, which ran as follows:—

"Made V^{ve} Durand et ses enfants, Mons^r Charles Durand, M. et M Louis Dufay, M. M. Raoul et Victor Durand, M. M. Albert et Christophe Leguy ont l'honneur de vous faire part de la perte douloureuse qu'ils viennent de faire en la personne de

*M. Anatole Hippolyte Durand (avocat)
leur mari, père, fils, frère, beau-frère, oncle, grand oncle
et cousin, décédé . . ."*

As Mrs. Hogpen had spelled out this last line her eyes had opened widely and more widely till she could suppress her horror no longer—

"What!" she screamed; "is this letter to tell you *all* those people are dead! And all the men too! What in Heaven's name did they die of? I don't think I ever 'eard tell of such a thing in my life before! Why, there can't be nothink but females left! Oh dear! oh dear! That his a terrible business." . . .





People who "wouldn't be seen" in omnibuses—Pickpockets—"male and female"—A practical instance of their skill and their victims' credulity—"Beware of pickpockets"—Guilty conscience—An amateur actor rehearsing—A case of mistaken identity—Scripture-readers and Tract-distributors—Busybodies—A busybody snubbed—Group of a mother and child—The baby's dear stupid face—Its meditations—and my own—"Volunteer" lads—A well-informed Jewess—Discomfited for all that—Two poor poets—Modern poetry.

OTHER distinguished (and also undistinguished) persons have I met in omnibuses besides those I have named, but they mightn't like it mentioned. There are even yet (weak?) people who don't at all mind availing themselves of the cheap convenience of an omnibus, but they wouldn't have it known for the world; they sneak in after looking cautiously round and they sneak out again with the same circumspection, and while they remain there they creep cat-like into the remotest corner and curling themselves round, keep one eye furtively on the company and with the other look persistently away; *more* persistently if they suspect

they have caught a glimpse of any one who could recognise them ; they have an ostrich-like idea that by this means they are not seen, but of course they *are* all the same.

Now as I am happy to say, I have none of this snobbish *mauvaise honte*, this *αἰδῶς οὐκ ἀγαθῇ*, as Hesiod has it. When I get into an omnibus, I enter boldly in the face of day, always securing as soon as I possibly can one of the seats near the door. My reasons for this preference must be as manifest as they are manifold, and among them is one founded on the probability that well-dressed women as well as well-dressed men, who often constitute the cargo, *may* not be—I don't say *are* not—exactly what they seem, and by this means I am at all events secure on one side out of two. The French proverb says, "*Il n'y a rien qui ressemble tant à un honnête homme qu'un voleur,*" and this is logical ; if a pickpocket *looked* like a pickpocket he would have no chance at all ; his successes entirely depend on his looking like anything but what he is.

An incident which I remember hearing of at the time it occurred, and which has been revived of late, will serve to illustrate the cleverness with which the light-fingered gentry who frequent omnibuses can disguise themselves as well as their object. An old lady who had just left an omnibus, discovered that she had been, quite unconsciously, relieved of the contents of her pocket ; she made her way to the nearest police station, and, on the principle of shutting the stable door after the horse is gone, she sought the inspector and opened to him her griefs, with all attendant circumstances.

"Who sat next you, ma'am ?" said he.

"Oh, a very respectable helderly gentleman, sir, a feeble invalid-looking gentleman as 'ad met with a hacciden, for he carried the harm next me in a sling! it was in splints, sir, and quite stiff-like, so it couldn't be him, and on the other side was the door, so I can't make it out at all."

"Respectable elderly rascal, marm," said the inspector; "he's a good deal younger than you are, and in quite as good health as myself; and he wore a respectable cloak too, didn't he?—a short one?"

"That he did, sir."

"Then I suppose you begin to guess now who robbed you?"

"No, sir, I don't know who it could be, because that dear old gentleman was the only passenger near me, and he 'ad his arm in splints and was dreadful afraid of hany-one passing of 'im, and a-touching of it."



"Well, then, I'll tell you, because you'll probably get robbed in the same way again; that 'arm' as you call it 'in splints' wasn't *his* arm at all."

"Lor bless me, sir, you don't mean to say it was any-one helse's!"

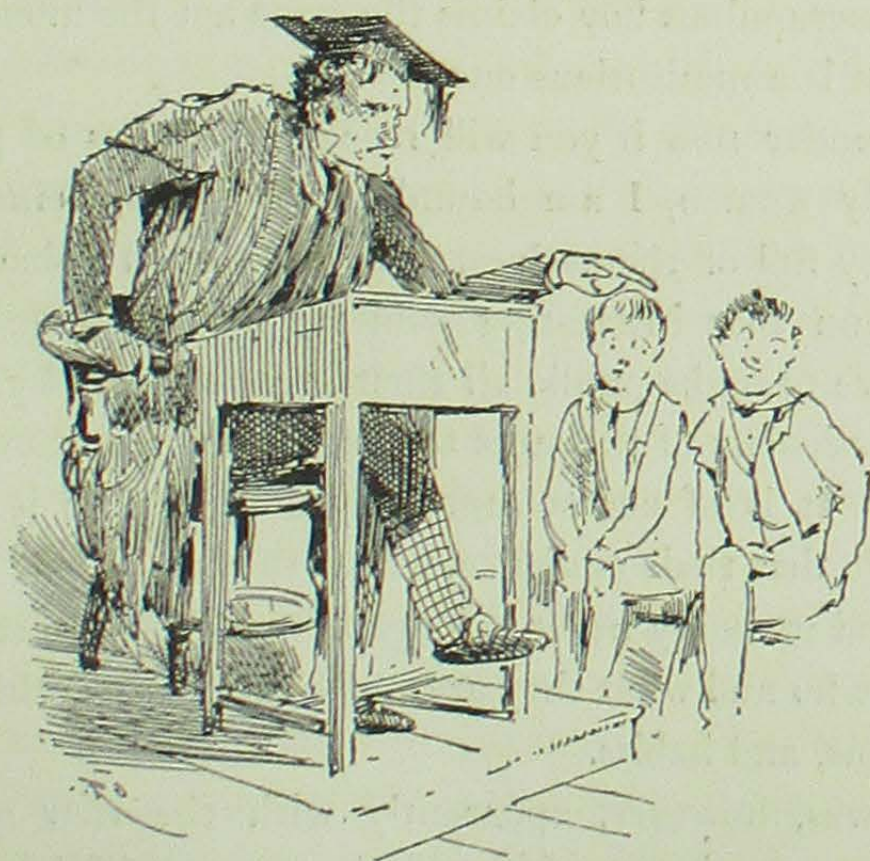
"No, I *don't* mean that; I mean to inform you that what you keep on calling an arm was a sham; his real arm was under his cloak, and his real fingers in your pocket go to make the harm of the whole story."

“Good gre-ashus me! What wickedness there his in the world to be sure!” exclaimed the naïve old lady, completely flabbergasted by the horrifying revelation, “and me a pitying on him all the time. It ’ud be better for ’im if he ’ad only one harm to go into life, than having two, to put on another and go into heverlasting fire with three!”

“It *is* horful” undoubtedly, as the old lady thought; but at the same time (and now we have come to the other side of the “mixture”), however necessary human frailty may render it, I do *not* like to see those suggestive printed cautions staring one in the face as one enters one’s ’bus—“BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS,” and then in small caps below, as if in a hoarse whisper—“MALE AND FEMALE.” It makes one’s flesh creep as one looks round to see to which of one’s fellow-passengers it can apply, and of course *they* look round to see if it is not to oneself: this is not exactly pleasant, it keeps one in hot water, and if a neighbour fumbles in all his pockets (as people often do) before he can find his purse, you can’t help fancying he looks suspiciously at you, because you are seated next him, and you seem to trace on his lips the coming accusation—“My money’s gone, and thou art the man.” You may say such an apprehension could only proceed from a guilty conscience, but I do feel uncomfortable under the circumstances, though I assure you I never stole a purse in my life; indeed, I believe I may go so far as to say that I never stole *anything*—Eh?—What?—well, yes, perhaps I did put my fingers into the cupboard in the days when there was “no *satis* to our *jams*,” but

that wouldn't make me feel like a pickpocket now. No, sir, it is the effect of that vulgar intimation. Of course there must be a pickpocket among the company, or why the caution to "beware" of him—or her! Therefore each one who knows it is not himself knows also it must be somebody else, and so we are all equally under suspicion; and to feel that you are suspected, and can't possibly justify yourself without making bad worse, is the next thing to feeling guilty. I think it is Ouida who said, "Explanation is always a mistake," and she wasn't far wrong.

The boy who was suddenly and sternly asked by the examiner—"Who signed Magna Charta?" though he



knew very well he never had, couldn't help trembling the moment he thought he was supposed capable of anything

that could be spoken of in such a tone, so he naturally renounced the deed with alarm and indignation—"Please, sir, I didn't," adding illogically, "and if I did I'll never do it again."

"Why, you little booby," said the master, "I didn't say there was any harm in it, did I? On the contrary, it was a very proper thing to do, and a good job it *was* done."

"Please, sir," instantly interrupted a sharp young fellow on the same form, "it was me, sir; I done it, and I means to go hon a doin' of it hall the days of my life."

This at once illustrates the power of accusation; the innocent boy denies what he supposes to be a crime, and the unscrupulous boy claims the same act the moment he hears it is a meritorious one.

I wonder now if you will recognise a class of persons (usually women, I am bound to say) who, being inordinately full of themselves, wish every one to share their views on that interesting subject, and will ingeniously contrive to make public all their private affairs by shouting particulars of the same to the friend who accompanies them. It is of course supremely silly, because it is impossible that their audience, whom they never saw before, and will probably never see again, can care one straw to know who and what they are and what are their thoughts, opinions, and habits.

It was, however, apparently with the view of thus calling attention to himself that a youthful *amateur débutant* (for he could have been nothing else) whom I met one day in an omnibus, had taken into his head to

utilise the time by studying his part for some forthcoming private performance, apparently inspired by the desire that his fellow-passengers should know what a "star" he was. His aspect was singular, partaking of the Oscar Wylde type, with a servile dash of Irving; he was a youth of perhaps five-and-twenty, and his outward appearance was probably indicative of his mind, which I should not have been surprised to find tolerably shallow. His dress was the result of a considerable amount of study, designed most likely in conformity with the vagaries of some original he had chosen as his model. He carried his hair somewhat long, and his neck rose from a Byronic collar, while his face was guiltless of any capillary attraction. He wore a drab dust-coat of fashionable cut, deep linen cuffs which he "shot" occasionally in the most approved style, a white waistcoat, and light trousers. In his hand was a thin MS. copy-book obviously containing his *rôle*. It was impossible not to observe the gestures and grimaces with which he thought proper to emphasise the mental perusal of the pages, and supremely absurd they were; he had now, in his enthusiasm for his task, passed that stage which courts the attention of others, and I was soon led to suppose he had become unconscious of his gesticulations, for presently he so far merged his identity in that of the character he represented that he suddenly dropped on one knee, and with dramatic agitation, while throwing back his head to invoke the beloved object, seized the hand of an old lady in the opposite seat: she, not having been apprised of a rehearsal, and therefore terrified at what she naturally took for the

attack of a lunatic, uttered a shriek of alarm, which startled us all and brought our hero speedily to his senses as well as to a consciousness of the ridiculous figure he cut. He looked wildly round, but only to meet our amused and astonished faces; there was but one course in such an emergency, and he took it: he hastily collected his fare, thrust it into the conductor's hand and bolted. A sense of the ludicrous seemed to pervade the company in common; we looked at one another and then joined



in a unanimous and hearty laugh. It was as good as a play, indeed it *was* a play, and I doubt if that performer ever produced on the dramatic stage an effect as striking as that he unintentionally hit off in the omnibus-stage.

I must tell you of another little omnibus scene which also proved quite an abridged farce; but if I related it with all the unvarnished epithets which illustrated it, it would become a proof of that assertion, "that those who come to high words are generally betrayed into low language."

It was on the darkish winter afternoon of an abnormally foggy day, that a florid, jolly-farmer-like-looking fellow got into the omnibus. As he entered he shaded his eyes

with his hand, and peering for a moment at the passenger occupying the furthest seat, stretched over, and slapping him heartily on the shoulder with the conviction of a man who feels sure he is not mistaken, shouted out—

“So I *have* found you at last, old fellow; but I made a funny mistake in the fog this morning. I met a fellow I took for you, and when I was asking after Mrs. Puffy and the young ladies, he cut up rough and exploded like a pistol; ha, ha, ha, I couldn’t help laughing, you know.”

“Sir,” interrupted the other, furiously, “this is too much; how dare you insult me a second time on the same day? Puffy indeed!—accosting me like a pork-butcher, which I’ve no doubt you are—and—and indeed I’m pretty sure you’re doing it for a wager. Sir, I *won’t* be Puffed by you



nor any one else, and if I could only see one of those scoundrels of policemen who are never where they’re wanted, I’d give you in charge, I would, for assault. What business have you to slap me on the shoulder, first this morning, and then over again now?” “Oh, I say, look here,” said the countryman, “I don’t want none o’ this here. Conductor, you let me down, or we shall have a row in here; I ain’t used to your blessed London fogs, no, nor yet to your London grumpies.” Then turning round once more to the surly city man, he said as he got down—“I

will say this though before I go: Puffy's as good as you, any day, old pouter-pigeon, and *you* ain't the one that's hurt when you're taken for him."

Did you, gentle reader, ever happen to meet a piety-monger in a public conveyance? It seems to me a mean thing on the part of these indiscreet and impolitic enthusiasts to take advantage of your helplessness and to persecute you with their wares when you have no means of avoiding them; but no doubt this is the very hobble into which they hope to get you. I well know the aspect—half-shabby, half-clerical—of the Scripture-reader who sometimes ventures to think it incumbent on him to "speak a word in season;" besides such, members of the Salvation, and of the Blue-ribbon, Army, Protestant and sometimes Catholic nuns, also travel in the omnibus; Puseyite parsons, Church of England clergymen, and occasionally Catholic priests. But it is not of these I have to speak, and the example of supererogatory zeal I am about to cite, was that of an Evangelical female tract-distributor. It was, I think, in the Harrow Road that this individual entered the 'bus, accompanied by another of her sex, far less conspicuously dressed; she might, indeed, had she been alone, have passed muster, but the singularity of her companion's attire left her no chance. A pair of black goggles at once made her appearance singular, but may have been worn as a matter of necessity. She was well over fifty, tall, gaunt and bony, with large hands and feet, hard features, rough skin, and iron-grey hair, smoothed into "bands." She wore a bonnet shaped like an inverted coalscuttle covered with some sort of black stuff, and a

white frill inside surrounded her face ; a straight-cut cloak of the same material partly concealed a blue striped cotton dress, and her hands were covered with long washed-leather mittens. The two were no sooner seated than she proceeded with marked deliberation to open a black leather bag she had placed on her knees and which I perceived was filled with "leaflets." I began to wonder what she would do next as I observed she looked round her and took note of each physiognomy in turn, through her grim glasses. She now

plunged her hand into the bag and selected as many tracts as there were persons, proceeding methodically and impartially to distribute them ; the one passed to myself was entitled "*On which road are you travelling?*" I



took it, but, pulling out a pencil, I wrote under the question the answer, "By Regent Street to Charing Cross" and passed it back to her. As I could perfectly well imagine the expression with which she would receive it, I forbore to look up, but attentively perused the columns of a newspaper I luckily had about me. I could not, however, help catching the word "reprobate," nor could I doubt to whom it was applied ; I was conscious also of the acquiescent reply of the lady she had appealed to for

her appreciation of my conduct. Fortunately there were four passengers between her and myself or no doubt an animated discussion would have followed and would then have found its way into these pages. But I was by no means the only rebel in the company ; for, meantime, the other passengers, to whom similar and doubtless equally appropriate doses of godliness had been administered gratis, had been meeting these demonstrations with questionable responsiveness. One gentleman contented himself with folding his arms, looking straight before him, and ignoring the attention ; another, seeing what was coming, twisted his neck round, and turned his gaze resolutely out of window, after the manner of a dog who has made up his mind against a bone that has been offered him, and is too well-bred to growl out-loud ; a third stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat arm-holes and whistled with elevated chin ; a fourth politely bowed but waved off the proffered gift ; but the fifth, a woman, gathered hers in with a bow and a solemn smile of recognition, looking round to intimate that she, at least, knew how to appreciate the spiritual treasure and that she profoundly pitied those who were so lamentably blind to their eternal interests. When all had been offered the means of grace and a chance of salvation, the tract-distributor, who probably thought she had been acting the parable of the sower, for some reason best known to herself, emptied the contents of the bag into her lap, and proceeded ostentatiously to sort them. She was entirely absorbed in this occupation when the vehicle suddenly stopped, and as no one moved, the conductor put in his head and called out—"Dook Street!—some-

body told me as I was to put 'em down at Dook Street.” “Now then,” he added with undisguised impatience, “we can’t be standin’ ’ere hall day.” The friend accompanying the zealous female had been tugging at her companion’s arm, and was trying to stow away the pious literature, which having slipped off her lap now littered the floor; the latter was not only in a terrible fluster at having been surprised in the midst of her unreadiness, but showed she was no *practical* Christian by the angry words and gestures with which she reproved her companion for “meddling with the things and making matters ten times worse.” The passengers were now getting angry as well as the conductor, and the position was aggravated by the arrival of two fresh passengers waiting outside for the reversion of the seats: the gentlemen, already aggrieved by her interference with *them*, now interfered with *her*, and set to work collecting the scattered tracts into a bundle, which they threw out into the road, while the conductor, by dint of pulling and urging, had got the women out. The whole scene afforded infinite merriment to a troop of schoolboys, who seemed to have dropped opportunely from the skies and who proceeded to scramble for the “leaflets.” This ignominious retreat was by no means distasteful to the passengers, who thought they did well to be angry, but the climax was not yet reached, for it was only after order was restored that the unlucky conductor discovered that in the confusion he had neither claimed nor received his fares. “Ah! then and there” wasn’t there a row! The conductor was not gentlemanly, nor even forbearing, in his utterances; I won’t

trust myself to repeat his remarks, but as he declared he should have to "lose the fourpence out of which those d——d women had swindled him," and it was not a very serious consideration to us, we collected the amount and handed it to him, though I can't help thinking he would have known how and whence to help himself if we had *not* helped him.

I don't for a moment wish to excuse these women, nor to hint that in a civilised and more or less conventional community, such breaches of the tacit good faith under which we are enabled to employ public carriages at all, could be tolerated; yet there is, it must be admitted, something noble in the entire self-abnegation a person must arrive at before she could place herself in such a very invidious position; for I was charitable enough to believe this woman's anxiety for our souls to be real and not feigned, nor to proceed from any but a good motive. Of course these officious familiarities with strangers may indicate a prying spirit, and that curiosity as to our neighbour's affairs specially attributed to women, and which for my part I am quite at a loss to understand.

There are undoubtedly numbers of the fair sex who having no special duties of their own are all alive to the business and circumstances of others, and moreover pique themselves on being able to supply details of the family and domestic concerns of all their neighbours and acquaintances. If they see a knocker tied up, they must immediately ascertain by hook or by crook whose cat has kittened; if they meet a carriage decorated with the tell-tale insignia of matrimony, they must inquire into

the pedigree on both sides the house ; if a funeral passes, even in the street, their natural impulse is to ferret out the name of the deceased : " Whom are they burying ? " inquired one of these indefatigable busybodies once of a man in the crowd :

" Well, ye see, ma'am," whispered in a confidential tone the Hibernian thus addressed, " it niver does to be too shure ; but faith, betwane you and me, I'm almost persuaded it's the jintleman as is in the coffin." A rebuke she richly deserved.

But a truce to digressions ; " gentle reader," if you happen to have some spare coppers and a little leisure, let us make an omnibus-expedition together, and for our edification take stock of the little incidents we shall encounter by the way.

As I start from a *tête de ligne*, and am the first inside passenger, I proceed to scan one by one the actors who arrive to fill up the shifting scene performing on this moving stage.

I remark with artistic admiration the regular, not to say beautiful profile of a young woman who has taken the further corner ; a " nursing mother," healthy, homely, but neat in her dress, and of the lower middle class. She has her infant on her knee, also a goodly specimen, and I set her down as a country-girl, perhaps a laundry-maid in some old county family in the shires, who has captivated and married the coachman—not very idyllic truly, and yet that courtship no doubt had its poetry.

It has been said that " no matter how prosaic an individual may seem, depend on it there is a romance in his

life," and I am inclined to think this is not very far from truth. Moreover, as I look at this group I fancy Raphael would have seen in it a possible "Madonna and child," in spite of the bathos of cottage bonnet and tartan shawl and the braided pelisse of the infant. If, I mentally remark, the outline of the side face be so lovely, what an inspiration must there be in the full face if she would but turn this way! and I wait in vain for a glimpse of it; the irritating profile remains fixed there, and it won't do to keep my gaze towards it now that there are half-a-dozen pairs of eyes upon me. Presently I venture to look again and then, I can hardly believe I see the same young



woman there; for what do I behold? A hard, unmeaning, vulgar face, freckled forehead, coarse features, and—O ye gods and little fishes!—a squint! However,

this is not the first time I have observed this phenomenon—an utter want of correspondence between the profile and the full face: but the child is clean and well cared for, sturdy also, and doesn't cry. Its face is turned toward the door and with an owl-like gaze it stares out into the light: the expression is suggestive from its very meaninglessness and stolidity. It is entirely self-possessed, and its eyes wander from one passenger to another with a stare not altogether stupid, and yet vacant and unimpressed: it is perfectly calm, satisfied, and indifferent—

the impersonation of passiveness. The other twelve passengers (I say twelve, because of course *it* doesn't count) must have traversed this phase, though they remember no more of that now than of any prior, and some successive, conditions through which they may have passed. How mysterious! and how equally strange that having lived the very life that infant is living now, we should be unable to describe or even to divine what is at this moment occupying the vague, undefined, chaotic thoughts of that living, breathing, but unconscious and irresponsible being before us. How strange it seems too that, of the brief allowance of three-score years and ten—or the many yet shorter terms allotted to many—so large a proportion should be consumed in the rudimentary development of those faculties which will have to be employed in acquiring, retaining, and imparting ideas, before the work of education can even begin! and yet how much has to be achieved by the end of the few succeeding years! The number of those who have distinguished themselves in various careers, and have died in the attainment of deathless fame at or before the age of thirty-seven has been recorded, and they are remembered with admiration by a grateful posterity; yet out of that short period of less than forty years, what a comparatively protracted portion was employed in an unremembered, mechanical, embryonic shaping of the mental powers!

Presently the young mother alights; she picks up her baby (who accepts the treatment as a matter of course) as unceremoniously as if it were any other bundle, and departs carrying *it* along with her; it has not even a

recognised sex as yet! Every one of us must have been similarly dealt with once: the greatest statesmen, the most distinguished writers, the most imaginative painters, the most successful discoverers, the bravest heroes, the most intelligent *savants* once looked as absurd, and were considered as insignificant as this little drivelling non-entity. Who knows? Perhaps it is the destiny of this mute, characterless, turnip-faced puppet to become one day the bearer of a great and glorious name: who can guess what sort of oak-tree will grow, long after he himself is forgotten, out of the acorn he holds in his fingers; not the faintest indication does it bear of the germs from which are to spring the trunk, branches and foliage; neither is there anything to tell us in what storehouse of that chubby chin is stowed away the future beard, which will one day make its wearer the terror of creatures such as he himself is now—spoken of in the neuter gender, and regarded as a thing rather than an individual!

The vacant place and that beside it are now invaded by a couple of common-looking lads in Volunteer war-paint. Their regiment is apparently a Scotch one, for the uniform is a sort of mongrel, semi-military, semi-Highland combination. They carry their fire-arms, at which two giggling Misses affect to shy, and innocently “hope they are not loaded,” the question being probably intended as a preliminary to conversation. The youths, however, are too stupid to take the hint, so it falls flat, and becomes a *brutum fulmen* after all! They don’t seem to have gained along with their “Volunteer drill,” that gallantry for which the (real) soldier of all grades enjoys

so enviable a reputation, neither have these lay-recruits acquired the activity, alertness, and precision by which we at once recognise an "army-man." After they have got down, I am not much surprised to hear a fellow-passenger deliver himself on the subject as follows:—

"Now lookee there," says he, to a companion, "don't it seem as if some'ow there was a something wanting about them wollunteers? One can't rightly say what; but you can see with 'arf a heye that they hain't the reel thing; they wants a deal more drillin' to make a henemy afeard on 'em; all the same it oughted to be a fine thing, a wollunteer harmy," forgetting that in England, where there is no conscription, the whole military force is a volunteer army, albeit there is the *solde* in one case and zeal alone in the other.

As these leave, we receive in exchange a stout, noisy, showily-dressed Jewess; she wears many of those glittering adornments not distasteful to her sex generally and highly prized by the women of her nationality in particular. She is overflowing with ideas and facts, all more or less tinged with scandal, and, lacking any other ear into which to pour them, enlists as listener a meek young woman beside her; but the meek young woman is only a pretext, and her object being as the French say "*de faire galerie*," she pitches her voice so as to be heard by all the company. She is, or wishes to be supposed, an *habituée* of the line on which we travel, for she is familiar with everybody's business, and knows, or pretends to know, the history of every shop we pass.

"Look at them bonnets and 'ats, my dear," she ex-

claims, as we approach one of the numerous milliners of Regent Street ; “ you know it’s all a blind to call themselves by them Frenchified names of ‘ Mathilde ’ and ‘ Clotilde ’ and what not : why bless yer ’art alive, its hall one concern, that is ; it’s a company, a Henglish company, that’s what it is, the same as Whitely’s, and them gals as tries on the ’ats—well it isn’t my business to say ’ow many trades they drives at once, but if I liked I could—I say I *could* tell yer a rare lot about ’em ; but I’d rather not, that’s where it is. Them as meddles with other people’s business—you know the rest, my dear, so I never meddles.”

“ D’ye see that jeweller we’re passing now,” she continues, “ well, hall I mean to say about ’er is I wish I’d ’er money ; you wouldn’t catch *me* such a hass as to go marrying a good-for-nothink hidle feller ; a thinking too that he cared for anythink but what he got with her ; Lor’ help me, what fools some women har ! ”

The young woman more particularly addressed, though overwhelmed with this torrential volubility, probably thinking it only civil to make some response that will testify to the attention with which she has listened, timidly remarks—

“ You are quite right, ma’am.”

“ Well, my dear,” interrupts the other sharply, “ if you would only listen instead of talking all the time, and let *me* go hon, I could a told you ’ow often that humbereller shop ’as changed ’ands in the last haiteen months and a ’arf : a regler hunlucky place that is ; nothink don’t hanswer there ; it’s like that with some places, do what

you will, when once they goes wrong, it's all hup with 'em. I always says if a shop don't hanswer the first time you'd best pull it down and begin hover again." The speaker here paused literally for breath, and the girl, warned now, is careful not to avail herself of the opportunity; this forbearance seems thoroughly to puzzle the garrulous lady, but finding no opposition to this theory, she proceeds with an illustration.

"Now there's that there place in Long Haiker as begun with St. Martin's 'all; *that* didn't do; next it was a theayter, and *that* didn't wash; then come them there make-believe stores, and set theirselves hup there and carried hon their games for a bit, and then went clean hout like a lamp when the gas is turned hoff—not very clean neither, for I know I lost a lot of money by



'em, and I calls it a dirty business, I do. Lor' bless you, my dear, I've seen a deal o' life, I 'ave; I wasn't born yesterday, and I knows 'oos 'oo; but that's neither 'ere nor there. Now *there's* a business at that poulterer's; that's what I call creditable, they serves hall the best famlys, and haltogether different from that there baker, which it is a 'orse of another colour, quite hup another

lane, and, I can tell *you*, my dear, whatever you may"—

"Werry sorry to hinterrup' you, mum," says the conductor, looking in, "but didn't you say 'Wigo Street,' 'cos we passed that hever so long ago?"

"The doose you did! Well I like your himperance to come and hask me that; and why, why in the name of all that's stoopid, you hidget! why don't you stop *now*?"

"Why, mum," replies the fellow, after signalling the driver with provoking deliberation, "your conwersation were that hinterestig, I never thought about the street a flyin' past—I'm werry sorry I'm sure mum."

"Now, that sort o' blarney won't fetch me; I can see which way the cat jumps, and if I pays you 'arf my fare it's as much as I shall do."

"Can't do it, mum, by no manner o' means."

"Can't or no can't, you takes that or nothink; d'ye think I'm a goin' to walk all that way back and no compensation for time and shoe leather?"

"You should a looked out, Missus, hinstead o' henlarging on hall them particlars."

"Well, I never did! that would be a joke; look hout myself arter I'd told you the street! D'ye think I'm going to keep a dog and bark myself? Not a farthing more do you get from me, my man, and what's more, I'll report you."

Whether the conductor was intimidated by the threat, or bewildered by the flow of words, or feared to detain the vehicle any longer, I can't say, but he contented him-

self with stamping his foot violently on the step, perhaps by way of expressing his irritated feelings, perhaps as a signal to the driver, who spun on as soon as a couple of poorly-clad, needy-looking, half-starved fellows had got in. I decide within myself they are authors—(perhaps members of the “Incorporated Society”)—not altogether from their abject appearance, but because, also, their talk runs on the wrongs of copyright law, the iniquity of publishers, and the depression of Grub-Street matters generally; they expatiate too on the vitiation of public taste, and the unaccountable antipathy of the present day to poetry—they didn’t say *whose*!—no, but I guessed it. Poor devils! I felt very sorry for them: it seemed such a hopeless case! I know what my own feeling is when I am at the London Library and happen to open a chance volume with an attractive title which I find to contain “poetry”—modern poetry, by writers who *think* they are poets! There may be one in fifty who is right, but the other forty-nine? No; Byron’s quite good enough for me; I don’t want anything better, other opinions notwithstanding,—he has not left much for any one else to say—and I close the book again, and put it far from me, pitying from my heart the poor fool who has thus wasted time, eyesight, temper, midnight oil (or gas) and stationery, for I’m quite sure no publisher ever paid him for it, and of course a lot of money went after all that, to pay for paper, presswork, corrections—oh those insidious corrections!—binding and advertising! An author who is satisfied with grovelling in prose *may* get read by a refined (?) and discriminating (?) public (if his work

be tolerably bad), even if he have no name; but poetry! poetry—who would look at it unless its perpetrator has the prestige of a previous reputation? Of course there *are* modern poets—just a few, a *very* few—whose productions charm us by their originality, their imagination, their grace; but dear me, these few are rare stars of the first magnitude which don't shine on us every night. You can't *get* people to believe in contemporary poetry, it doesn't fetch them: the age is too matter-of-fact. Ask the publishers.





A man with a *tic*—Philosophical endurance of annoyances—The virtue of tolerance—Morality and metaphysics—A man with a stick—A stout American lady—Stout passengers generally—Illustrative anecdote—A dapper little man—His little ways and little plans—Glove buttons—Suspensions of what he has in his little mind—How I know what he is after—Little misfortunes—Are they “little”?—An Accident—Significant Arrangements—Inskipp’s expedient—Courting—A confidential confession—A matrimonial episode—An opportune omnibus—What is it rules our destinies?—Fate—Law—Free-will—Faith—Lord Lytton’s view—No escaping metaphysics—How Lord Byron courted his . . . fate—Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Johnson, fatalists—Mark Pattison’s fate—Decided by an omnibus—So-called “renegades”—Unconscious Catholics—Rustic types—A Welsh story—a Welsh jury’s verdict.

My attention is diverted from the discouraged poets to an individual afflicted, as I try to believe, with a facial *tic*, for it is only charitable to attribute to an involuntary cause the constant repetition of a most extraordinary manœuvre which draws my eyes to him, as these tricks will, in spite of oneself: each time I turn in that direction I observe him widening his mouth and simultaneously drawing up his eyes as if able, only by a supreme effort, to retain a “horse laugh;” and yet it cannot be

expressive of hilarity, for the next instant he is as grave as a judge: it is quite a relief when he gets out, as it is impossible to guess what such a fellow might take into his head to do next. He is to be pitied, no doubt; but not nearly so much as those who are exposed to the annoyance of his ways. I tell myself there is a reprehensible want of self-discipline in suffering one's mind to be ever-so-little unhinged by trifles, especially those which, as a gregarious animal, one must know one is liable to encounter; and further, that tolerance is a reciprocal virtue which all are bound to cultivate unless they resolve to eschew sociability, and lead an eremitical life in a little private world of their own. My application of the little sermon I have been preaching to myself is destined very soon to be put to the test; but, ignoring the late Duke of Wellington's aphorism that "a man who is good at making excuses is good at nothing else," I assert that this time I *am* justified in my exasperation, for this new rascal's *tic* is purely gratuitous, and the annoyance *he* inflicts on his neighbours is the result of a total want of regard for their feelings, and any evidence of bad taste or want of consideration for others seems to me unpardonable. He could perfectly well "help it" if he chose: there is, I contend, no valid reason why he should twiddle and twirl and twist and turn that abominable stick he holds in his fingers round and round and backwards and forwards between his knees: the vacant stare on his fat, stupid face too, provokes me all the more that conventionality protects his long, unlovely ears from the "box" he deserves. He evidently makes no allowance for the nerves

of others, especially of a fidgety, irritable old bachelor like myself, and I resent it as a personally-intended affront. *Does* he intend it though? Is he even conscious of my existence, and if so has it ever occurred to him that I am of a sensitive temperament; or does he know what he is about? Probably, coarse and untrained as he is, he has never learned the rules of forbearance or the ordinary amenities so essential to the peace and harmony of a civilised community, and in that case he is perhaps not responsible for the act. Do we, however, consider what we mean when we assert that a breach of the laws of society, or indeed any other offence, is the "fault"

of the person committing it? How do we know? Are we acquainted with the constitution of that man's mind, and do we know whether it contains the capacity for resisting that particular act? If we see a man *physically* crippled, limping clumsily along the street, we don't blame him for not moving with the grace of a



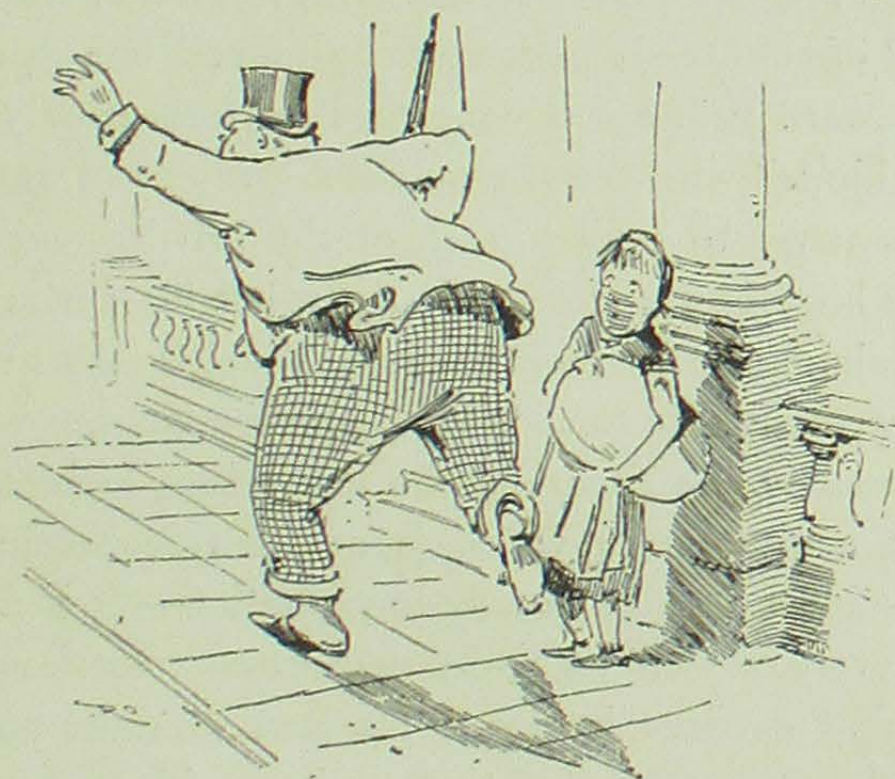
Vestris; the utmost we should say would be, "Poor wretch! he can't help it; he was born so;" and yet with unaccountable inconsistency, instead of pitying a man born a *moral* cripple, we treat him as if he *could* help it, and visit upon him his deficiencies: but I am afraid I am getting rather too near that dangerous scriptural enigma involving the fate of Judas. "It would have been better for that man if he had not been born"—and yet he *was* born, all the same! It is clearly a thing no fellow can

understand, and I mentally give it up, the less reluctantly that during these metaphysical divagations the object which started them has risen and reached the door; rejoiced I am when I see him take out two pence and give them to the host—no, I mean to the conductor, and I feel no sorrow that I shall see *his* face no more.

Whilst he is alighting a stout American lady, breathless with haste and superfluous flesh, is toiling along the roadway making frantic signals to the conductor to wait; I am uncharitable enough to hope he may not perceive them, there is only one vacant seat—a very limited one—and it is obvious two roomy ones would be nearer her requirements; however, my wishes go for nothing; the conductor, to whom size is no object though it may be to the other passengers and the cattle, hoists her up, leaving her to make the best of the situation. Stoutness seems to be the order of the day, for now my attention is called to the circumstance, I perceive the majority of the passengers are of the same inconvenient type. I cannot help recalling that admirable caricature of poor “old George’s,” drawn at the time when the omnibus was a new institution and representing one of these novel vehicles harnessed to a trio—it was in the early days of the omnibus, when the allowance was three quadrupeds—of the leanest of lean cattle, one of whom is looking round with consternation as the “fourteen inside passengers” licensed to be carried, are taking their places: the meek and resigned expression of his poor emaciated face speaks so eloquently that the words—“What! *all* fat!” are scarcely needed.

Some years ago a case occurred in the annals of

omnibus history which has its humorous side, and made some talk at the time. Its hero was a medical man named Edward White, remarkable for his imposing presence—imposing in more ways than one, for forgetful of his bulk and weight he one day hailed an omnibus with the view of imposing them on it. The conductor measured (and perhaps weighed) him with his eye, decided that so portly an individual could only be taken at twice,



and then without much hesitation shook his head while the vehicle rolled on. The stout gentleman, White by name, grew white with indignation, for to his second shout the conductor was inexorably deaf. Mr. White had no notion of being treated with this indifference, so in a white heat, he took down the number of the vehicle, and summoned the conductor. When the complaint had been heard, the magistrate decided in favour of the

defendant; but the complainant was not disposed to let the matter drop, and filled with righteous indignation carried his cause into another court, where (as generally happens in this lawyer-ridden country, where justice and equity refuse to be acquainted,) the decision was reversed, and the conductor had to learn that he was liable to pick up, regardless of dimensions, any passenger who chose to hail him; the worthy J. P. forgot to say what course a conductor should pursue should he be saluted by the "All Hails" of twenty-six passengers "all fat;" but, as far as Mr. Edward White was concerned he forbearingly contented himself with the triumph of a verdict and was wise enough never to avail himself of the privilege accorded him by law: it was clearly his right, but he remembered magnanimously that there are some people's rights which must necessarily be some other people's wrongs.

To resume the situation, the new-comer looks round with a consternation which is amply reflected in the countenances of those already in possession—(it is a fact which every one will recognise that a new-comer's arrival in a public carriage is always resented by those already there who seem to forget that he has paid as much as they have and has as good a claim upon his seat; stranger still, he seems to accept the situation and looks as if he felt he had no business to intrude)—one gentleman on the seat next to which she seems to meditate bestowing herself, grumpily remarks—

"I'm afraid, ma'am, there nothing for you to sit on."

"That air not the difficulty," she replies, with more accuracy than refinement, and with an intonation which

leaves no doubt as to her nationality—"guess I've plenty to sit on, but whar am I gwine to fix it?"

Though the speaker remains unconsciously grave, everyone else is on the titter, and it is only by dint of "over-running" and "closing up," and also by the timely withdrawal of the aggrieved gentleman who says he'll "ride outside," that the stout old lady gets packed in and looks victoriously round; but a readjustment of seats is soon needed, for we pull up again at the nod of a dapper little



man, who with the hems of his trousers carefully turned up, is engaged in picking his way with such fastidious attention that the patience of all is sorely tried.

"Come, Guv'nor," exclaims the conductor, "couldn't yer put on a little steam?—there's a lot on us a waitin' 'ere."

Self-conscious as he is, he has doubtless learned by this time that there are occasions on which his diminutiveness is against him, and it requires more dignity than he is

possessed of to carry it off. The conductor would probably have tolerated the delay from a big fellow, and it would not have occurred to him to hurry *his* steps; this is very hard and unfair, but so it is! Our little friend meekly accepts the humiliation and obeys the low man's bidding, tripping up the steps with an alacrity he soon has to deplore, for lo! three distinct and hideous mud splashes disfigure the hitherto faultless brilliancy of his smart little boots! How big?—Well, of the size of a shilling, and from that to eighteenpence; no joke you see, and he contemplates the disaster with hopeless desperation; but alas! to no purpose; what can't be endured, must be cured—no, I believe it is the other way, but no matter, you know, gentle reader, what I mean, and so does he. When he has made up his little mind that philosophy is the sole resource he has to fall back upon, he pulls off a pair of dark and somewhat the worse-for-wear kid gloves, and draws from his pocket a pair of brand new dogskins, bright yellowish-brown in hue, with violet sewings and four buttons. These he proceeds with grave deliberation to coax on, no easy task; they have been carefully selected as a tight fit: still what will not patience and perseverance perform; and accordingly in time they are pushed, pulled, driven, drawn, stroked, and finally fitted on, and then the buttoning begins. Eight buttons between them! What a lucky fellow he will be if none of them come off in the process; but for my British reticence I should offer to lay a wager on it with any of the company, but I am really as much excited over the issue as if I had a stake in it. Come off, of course, however they

do, and, as I consider, in a very moderate proportion, for six actually manage to hold on though by a very fragile tenure; but what can you expect?

"Alas! on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!"

wrote "Satan Montgomery;" and who can say what everlasting things in the life of our little hero may not depend upon those six buttons, or rather upon the slender threads that hold them? We all know the old proverb, "For want of a nail the horse was lost," &c., culminating in the loss of a kingdom, the fate of which was decided by the defection of that rusty nail.

As for the two buttons which have sprung off into space, the despair occasioned by their disappearance is so real that I am touched, and inwardly vow that were I but a neat, natty individual of the handy sex, instead of a stupid, useless old bachelor, I would whip out my thimble, needle, scissors, &c., and offer to sew them on. But, alas! no *Dea ex machina* appears, "no fairy came, no needle stirred," and the additional little misfortune has to be borne. I don't know why I qualify it as "little;" "little" is an absurd term; entirely relative; there is no "little," there is no "great;" and how often



. . . great things spring from little!

the magnitude of *anything*, no-matter-what, is entirely a matter of circumstance, and to be measured only by its surroundings: this jumps to the eyes so readily on the slightest reflection that any illustration would be superfluous; the theory of subjectivity is entangling as well as seductive, and were we to follow it up we don't know how far it might lead us away.

Our dapper little gentleman, having no choice, has accepted the double disaster, and is furtively proceeding with his arrangements: he removes his hat, and if he cannot produce from its depths quite as many *bouquets* as the Wizard of the North, he at least finds there as many as he wants; for, out comes a very tasteful "button-hole;" it is composed of a delicate, half-blown tea-rosebud, wired up with a small innocent sprig of *stephanotis* and a feathery spray of maiden-hair fern; I don't mention the other white flower I see there, for very good reasons; for I sympathise with the old lady who "never could remember all them there long Latin botanical names, and never attempted to retain more than the two of which she felt quite sure—*aurora borealis* and *delirium tremens*." With infinite solicitude, taking out a neat pocket-mirror, he fixes by its aid the floral decoration in its destined place, and at the same time rectifies the proportion of a violet-bordered silk pocket-handkerchief (a careful match to the sewings of his gloves) which has been trained to manifest itself *quant. suff.* from his breast-pocket.

This was a clever little artistic dodge of poor Inskipp's, whose eye being that of a painter, needed a little "bit of

colour" somewhere; and, failing the *cordon de la légion d'honneur*, which he told me he would have condescended to wear for that sole reason, he used to produce a crimson "arrangement" with the corner of a China silk handkerchief.

Having taken in these external details, I proceed to study his little physiognomy by way of arriving at his little character, and then the little mystery begins to dawn upon me like the rising day.

I read upon his face in Nature's undisguised autograph the *refrain* of the old nursery song of which "Froggie" is the hero; my friend is unmistakably on his way—I could take my "drop-down" of it—on his way to propound "the momentous question"! I can perfectly well appreciate his mental quiverings and quaverings, confident in his own self-conscious importance one moment; the next, timidly dubious in even the imagined presence of *her* surpassing charms!—How do I know? Why, bless me, do you suppose that because I am a crusty old bachelor now, that I can't appreciate the weaknesses of human nature? Ah! I too have had my youth, aye, and sowed my wild oats too, very much like other people I can tell you. What if I were to reveal to you what a gay young spark I once was, full of "living valour," and "burning with high hope," &c., &c?

Now, look here, gentle reader, I will take you into my confidence, on condition that you do not divulge my humiliating secret to mortal man—nor especially, please, to mortal woman. Believe me, you can't be too close in this treacherous world, for when not vile and treacherous,

it is silly, forgetful, frivolous, tattling. Always bear in mind that laconic but suggestive Oriental saying—"Thy friend hath a friend, and thy friend's friend hath a friend, and so on. Be discreet."

Trusting, therefore, to your honour, I will confess that in the heyday of my youth, and when literally in that ignorant cub-like condition in which we imagine calf-love to be love (! ! !) I fancied myself desperately smitten. I believe I thought it a grand, man-like phase of existence, and knowing no better, I supposed the proper thing to do next, was to pop the question. Do you know I got so near it as to go up the steps of the house that contained what I honestly believed to be the only perfect being ever created, under the heavenly form of my adored angel. I had my hand on the knocker, while my heart thumped so loudly that it seemed to me the artificial sound I was about to produce would be feeble in comparison ; people passed by in the street just as if nothing was happening, the dogs barked, the cats basked in the sun, the rude street-boy whistled, and the dustman swore at his horse, and yet—while all these things went on as they had every day before, and would continue to go on every day after, I was in a trepidation unlike any other I had ever known, and I felt as I had never felt before—at least I thought so, which is almost the same thing. I was very near matrimony that time, you see, yea, even at the very door. However, it wasn't to be, after all. Thank a merciful, protecting Heaven, it wasn't to be. Something happened—the most commonplace of incidents, the simple, fortuitous circumstance of another

man's happening to come up the doorstep at the same time! Yes—that decided my fate; the maid was a long time before she answered the summons; adjusting her cap perhaps—who knows? The issues of life, as we before observed, sometimes hang on something slenderer than a cap-ribbon!

“Had you knocked, sir?” inquired of me this fatal being—fatal though he knew it not, and was a mere stupid instrument in the hand of Destiny.

“I had, sir,” I replied, and then—by what happy instinct inspired I have never been able to make out, for I had only a dim suspicion that this powerfully-ode-colone-d young man might be a rival in my Mary-Jane's affections—I felt it was no



longer in me to do the thing. So, assuming a pre-occupied air, I pulled out my watch, and exclaiming “By Jove, it's an hour later than I thought, I shall have to call as I come back” I bowed to my new acquaintance and hurried down to the pavement; as luck would have

it (I'm quite sure, however weak and illogical to think so, that there *is* such a thing as luck), an omnibus was driving past ; hardly knowing what I was doing, I hailed it, bounced in, made for the furthest corner, ensconced myself there without so much as looking whither it was jogging, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, and caring for nothing so that I was but carried far, far away from that pomatum-ed fellow, and the scene of my meditated folly. Blessed omnibus ! What a haven of security that snug corner seemed to me at that moment ! What a celestial paradise after the purgatorial embers on which I had been



treading. Blessed omnibus ! I've loved the whole race of them ever since.

"Dear me, and why ?" ask you this in cold blood, gentle reader.

Well, then, since you *can* put such a question, I will tell you candidly and honestly. My confession shall be full and unreserved ; well, because, although that young man turned out to be only the hairdresser, yet my Jemima-Ann—no, I mean Mary-Jane—mine that was to have been, did marry some one else, and I thus had the opportunity of judging by another man's experience what my own fate would have been had I been the favoured swain—and yet—am I so sure of that ?

I believe there is something more than a truism in the paradoxical assertion "The case being altered quite alters the case," and that it is quite on the cards that had the

peerless Matilda-Susan, — no, no, Mary-Jane, become mine, she might have become also a different character altogether: perhaps better, perhaps worse, but at any rate different. Fichte says, “If from a heap of sand you withdraw one grain, the whole becomes, imperceptibly perhaps, but still, an altered heap.” It is a startling parable till you think it over, and then you recognise the fact and admit its analogy to human life.

Possibly, therefore, had the suspicious presence of that young man not intercepted my attentions, had my resolution not failed me, had I waited courageously till the door was opened instead of pusillanimously taking to flight, had the 'bus not been passing, had it not carried me to Hammersmith where I spent a fortnight trying to forget that absurd phase of my life, and had I not found Mary-Jane engaged to a gas-collector when I came back, I might —mind I don't say I should—but I might at this hour have been a proud and domineering *pater-familias* instead of a grumpy, lonely old bachelor.

I verily believe there exist minds which are convinced that certain events in their lives might have turned out differently *had* they only done so-and-so; turned to the right instead of to the left on some particular Monday, got out of one side of their bed instead of the other on the Tuesday, looked out of the back window instead of the front door on a Wednesday, &c. &c., the whole course of their life would have been changed. “Would it?” Well, I don't know; but it is perfectly possible you know that although they suppose they had a choice, they really had none, in the matter: we all suppose this, we are bound

to suppose it ; but depend upon it LAW—Universal Law is paramount, it presides over everything, overrules everything. We forget that everything which we, in our circumscribed ideas, talk of as “about to happen” has in fact already happened. Given an omniscient Being, it is obvious there can be no such thing as “past” or “future” in the abstract: these are simply arbitrary terms that measure time in *our* estimation and describe the occurrence of events *quoad* ourselves; besides, dear me, what becomes of prophecy—(and of course we all believe in that)—if the power of altering events rests with ourselves, who are simply whirligigs in the machinery, set to work out *foreknown* and (in cases of prophecy) *foretold* events;—but I had perhaps better not pursue this riddle of life, which it is only fair each one should be left to unravel for himself and make the best he can of it. Pope declares that the Great Ruler of creation—

“ Binding Nature fast in fate,
Left free the human will.”

I daresay He did, but I don't pretend to understand it; indeed, if we understood any of the things we are required to believe, where would be the room for Faith, that tenacious attribute of the human mind, strong beyond conception, whatever its object, when once it takes its hold—

. . . “ Oh ! the lover may
Mistrust the look that steals his soul away ;
The child may cease to think that it can play
With heaven's own lightning ; alchemists may doubt
The shining ore their crucibles give out ;
But Faith, fanatic Faith once wedded fast
To some dear error, hugs it to the last.”

And yet, as Lord Lytton has said—

“What is Faith but Doubt unceasingly repressed?”

But even supposing ourselves to hold the doctrine of fatality, we err, if error there be, in very good company. I could mention illustrious names by the score, of persons who have testified to a strong and practical belief in fatality. Who, who has read the life of Lord Byron, will have forgotten the characteristic fashion in which he is said to have left to Fate (“malignant Fate?”) to decide that grave question which was to influence his whole career. He wrote, it is said, two letters of matrimonial import, but of opposite significations, laid them on the table, and having rung for his groom threw himself on a divan.

When the man appeared, “Post one of those letters,” said his lordship.

“Which, my Lord?” asked the servant.

“Whichever you please,” was the reply.

The messenger of evil—“gay, careless wretch,”—indifferent to, and unconscious of, his act, which was nevertheless to tell directly on so many, and indirectly on so many more, took up the one he ought to have left, and had no sooner quitted the room with the other, than the doomed man rose to learn his fate and found himself irrecoverably done for!

Then look at the hard-headed, intelligent Sir Walter Scott, with his belief in omens and in lucky and unlucky times and seasons; he wouldn't have let his daughter marry in May, no not for the world; and as for the grave

and ponderous and philosophical Johnson, why, among other weaknesses, he had a particular way of setting down his foot across the divisions of the paving-stones, and if he missed one, he would turn on his steps and go back home ; it was all up with him, *diem perdidit*, &c., for that day ; he had put his foot in it, and would attempt nothing more.

It is written, *data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulchris* ; why shouldn't we substitute omnibuses for sepulchres and say he same of them ? A very Mark-ed instance of the fatefulness of which an omnibus is capable forms the subject of an Oxford legend which was rife in my undergraduate days, and is entitled to rank as a parallel to that of the Hammersmith omnibus which settled my own destiny, for this omnibus determined, not the matrimonial, but the "theological state," as Comte would have called it, of Mark Pattison's life.

The learned and distinguished Rector of Lincoln—then simply "Mr. Pattison"—had arranged to visit Oscott in company with the even more celebrated Cardinal (then Dr.) Newman, and an omnibus had been chartered to carry Cæsar and his . . . religion to that equivocal spot. The omnibus unaccountably failed them ; that visit was never made. They parted company, and Mark Pattison's mind, then just ripe for con-version (or per-version as each one is pleased or displeased to read it) was di-verted from that train of thought, and no change in his religious denomination, such as then appeared imminent, ever took place ! How many zealous enthusiasts of the one faith deplored, and how many not less enthusiastic partisans of the other, exulted over, this fortuitous result it would be

difficult to compute, though it would seem perfectly immaterial—so that a man be conscientious—what form of religion he follows. It is at all events exclusively his own affair, and he is probably a better judge than any one else can be of what he is capable of believing; yet every one must have an opinion, and must express it too, upon the creed of every other. We know that all con-verts meet with the utmost contempt from those from whom they have ventured openly to differ, and the man who joins a new form of belief is styled a per-vert by those whose creed he has weighed in the balance of his own judgment and has found wanting.

On what principle is the man condemned I should like to know? “I was born a ‘Jumper,’ and in that faith I live or die,” says the self-righteous reformed-religionist, setting his teeth with a determination which defies argument. If such a fellow were worth talking to, I should reply, “I was born (say) a Mahometan and I not only stick to the Mussulman belief and its practice, but I claim a plurality of wives, and shall live where the law won’t molest me in the enjoyment of my privileges.”

That would fetch him pretty quickly, I fancy, but he couldn’t answer me without stultifying himself. As for myself I can only say in the very sensible words of a French author whose works I have read but whose name I regret to have forgotten (I think Racan)—

“J’ai pitié de celui qui, fort de son système,
Me dit—‘Depuis trente ans ma doctrine est la même
Le suis ce que je fus—je crois ce que je croyais.’
—L’homme *absurde* est celui qui ne change jamais.”

I am not sure whether this is orthodox, but that doesn't alter the fact. A man who *thinks* must inevitably be constantly changing his opinions of all things that he studies and considers worth having an opinion about; and how can he make up his mind to one among such a bewildering number of creeds unless he does think?

Is the man who doesn't venture to change his religious opinions, and wouldn't think of anything so wicked as becoming a "renegade"—is this man aware that he is *ipso facto* a Catholic?—that the Baptist who makes Spurgeon his Pope, and adopts the doctrines of that pulpit because he "sits under" it, goes beyond every Catholic in the world in blind credulity; for *his* pope is avowedly self-constituted, whereas the real Pope doesn't give out doctrines on his own authority, being simply the mouthpiece *pro tem* of the ancient Church, which has been the "witness and keeper" of those doctrines ever since its foundation.

But I must ask you to re-descend to our sublunary conveyance.

When our great London public fairs 'yclept "Exhibitions," such as the "Fisheries," "Healtheries," and other 'eries or errors have drawn to London country-cousins who were glad to avail themselves of the excuse for a spree, there were often amusing types to be met in omnibuses. I have not forgotten finding myself, during the Inventories' fever, seated opposite two jolly old boys who had left their cares and their incumbrances behind them. They were cut out on the pattern of those two friends—highly appreciative of the blessings of liberty, who when one informed the other he was going to Margate for a

week, received the reply, accompanied by a knowing wink—

“Air ye agoin’ to enjoy yerself, Bill, or his the Missis agoin’ with yer?”

My two good friends had been spending the day at the great show *without* the Missis, there could be no mistake about that, for they had evidently dined there very much, and their spirits were further elevated by the prospect of “a evenin’ at the theaytre” (I believe it is frequently overlooked that this is really the classical pronunciation, and that it is the educated who are so illiterate as to utter the word with the other accentuation). It was their first visit, they told me, to “a Lunnun play-house, though of coorse they’d heerd tell about play-actors befoor: ’deed and they had.”

Do you know I envied those old fellows, not because they were without their “Missises,” nor yet because they were in such high spirits, but because at their time of life they were still capable of a new experience—on this occasion, a new and delightful experience. I envied them as I envy the man who has never read *Gil Blas*, or the man who has not yet seen St. Mark’s, Venice, or the Mezquito at Cordova, or the Colosseum at Rome, or the ruined Moorish Alcazar looking down on the crumbling and pathetic relics of Toledo—those living poems the first impression of which can be likened to nothing but a dream. In fact, what a world there may be between any first and second impression: take the *encore* of a song for example. It is only the child who asks his father to go behind the door and frighten him over again.

How few, alas! in these sophisticated days are not already *blasés* before they are out of their eggshell and, at half the age of my two youthful old companions, ready to echo that premature and touching lament of the poet, "at thirty years, whose hair was grey," and who "wondered," but didn't live, alas! to know, what "it would be like at forty!"—

"No more—no more—No, never more, on me
The freshness of the heart shall fall like dew,
Which out of all the lovely things we see
Extracts emotions beautiful and new!"

Presently their talk, characterised by a strong Welsh accent, began to rouse my attention. Taffy was relating to his brother-farmer an incident which seemed to have tickled him immensely, and he told it with a keen, if homely sense of humour. I can't say how the story began, but when I began to listen it was running on thus:—

"Well ye see, him and me wass a-drinkin' with a lot a chaps at the Crross Pipes, and the talk wass all about these here 'ventions, and so he says, 'D'you know I do think there be somethin' oncanny about some on 'em. Yer don't know what they'll be inventin' next; they've got a water wheel made of paperr, I'm told, and what not, and I shouldn't be surprised if they found out one a these days a way to carry watterr in a sieve.'

Then up gets a tidy sort a young chap and he larfs out loud and answers quite smart—

"'Deed and there wouldn't be nothin' very new if

they did: why I've knowed how to do that this long time.'

'Deed an you have!' answers Farrmer Jones, 'Brag's what you do know best, but as for a carr'in' a watterr in a sieve, you'll escuse me but I do *not* believe one worrd a that.'

'Not believe it, eh? What if I bet yer half-a-crrown that I do?'

'Half-a-crrown indeed! Not I, there's some trrick in the worrds.'

'No trrick at all in the worrds: I'll do the thing in this place before all on you.'

'Well then,' says Jones, 'here goes; only *me* to find the sieve, and as you do make yours a riddle, I do make the sieve a riddle; but that can't matter to such a smarrrt boy as you, and I'll have a good quarrrt a watterr carried in it a good hundred yarrds.'



'All right, Farrmer Jones,' says the lad, ''tis all the same to me; more'n that, instead of a quarrrt of watterr a hundred yards, I'll carry a gall'n a watterr half-a-mile.'

Well, all the other boys wass right earnest to see the thing done, and one of 'em said—

'That chap's that arrt-ful, ye can see he's ben to London, and after that *I* wouldn't bet with him, for they're up to

all manner a ungodly ways there, and maybe he do be goin' to get old Nick to help him.'

'Never you mind,' says Farrmer Jones, 'I'm as good as my worrd. I'll bet him his harf-crown, only mind this, "No cure no pay." Here do be witnesses enough, and if he don't stick to his bargain, it do be him as pays.'

So Farrmer Jones he sent for a riddle, and as he'd said he didn't mind if there did be a few holes in it, they brought as ugly a consarn as ever you seen. The young chap he did look at it, and his face went all awry, at which old Jones he began to laugh, petikler when the other did scratch his head, and say, 'it wassn't the best he'd ever seen for the purrpose,' and he 'didn't exacly know, but he'd trry what he could do,' and so on, as if he did be goin' to pull back.

'Now, none a that, my boy,' says Jones, 'the terrms wass me to find the sieve, and that's th' only one I means to find, so now you go across to the pump, and put in your gall'n a watter.'

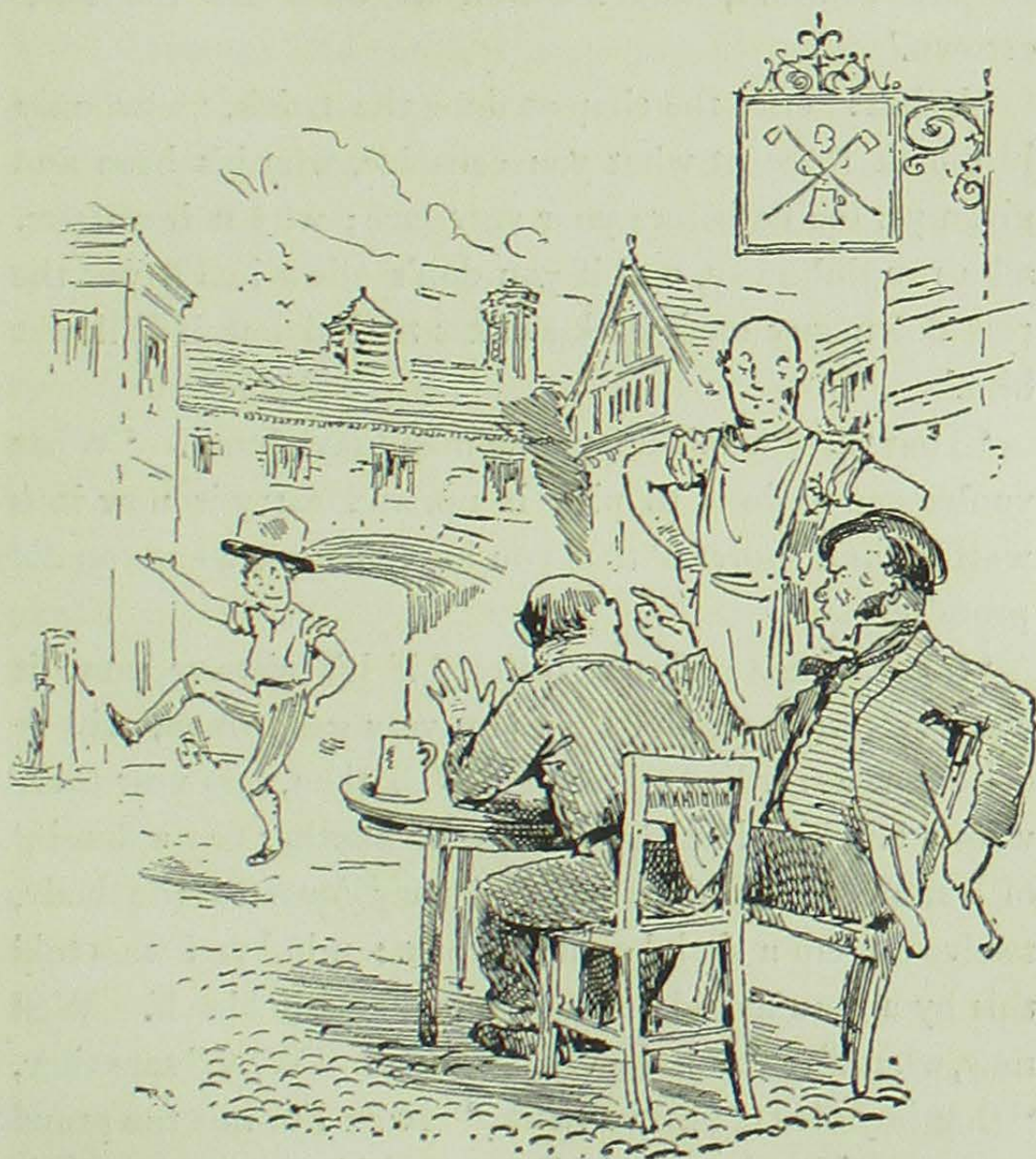
'Never mind,' says the boy, 'I'll do it all the same;' but first he asks, 'Is that there pump harrd or soft watter?' and old Jones he answers angry like, 'What do it mattern so as it do be watter whether it be soft or harrd? It's pretty plain you're a tryin' to be off.'

'Me a tryin' to be off!' says he. 'Not a bit of it. If you don't care for soft watter, no more don't I, so *harrd* let it be.'

So he gets up and goes across, but he went past the pump, and on to the fishmonger's, and soon out he comes again a dancin' an a prancin' and a balancin' th' old riddle

on his head, with a big lump o' ice in it.—'Now what d'ye think o' *that*?'

'Well done! Splendid! *Dyna villen o bachgen.*'
(There's a villain of a boy!) '*Llaw ofnadwy yw e,*'



hollered out all the fellows as wass sittin' there, all but the one as had spoke agenst the ways of London, and he did take side with Jones, and said it wassn't a bit fair.

As for Jones he got shockin' red, 'cos he saw he should lose one harf-crrown, and have to pay another, and he blusters out, 'I says the thing's not done: he says watterr, and I says watterr, and there was nothin' said about ice; so pay I won't, but it's him as owes *me* the harf-crrown.'

'What!' cries the chap as done the trrick, 'why only just look there at what you calls ice, why it's been and given yer the lie before your very face; why it *is* watterr, all a runnin' away, and if you don't allow it, I'll put the rest down any one's back as likes to find out if it'll wet him.'

'That there won't do, young man,' says Jones. 'What you've got to do is to pick it up, and carry it now it *is* watterr, and shorrt o' that you haven't done what you did promise.'

'I say,' answered the other, 'if it's watterr now, it wass watterr then, and I goes on very good lines; will ye beleeffe the word of a joory? Well then, lass year there wass a boy killed at Carmathen, by another boy a flingin' of a snowball at his head, and they 'quested the body, twelve on 'em a sittin' on it at wonst: mind ye I wass told this by a man as did be there and herrd it hisself. Well now, what d'ye think the verdick wass? "Why," says they, "that boy died o' harrd drrink." Now I'm not too proud to agree with a honerable joory, and if they says snow is harrd drink, I says ice is harrd watterr, and harrd watterr is what I said I'd carry, for you said yerself ye didn't want it to be soft.' And that was true enough," continued Taffy, "the lad had taken care of that. So old Farmer

Jones he hadn't not a leg to stand on, and he did have to stump up."

I needn't say that our fellow-passengers considered this story very good fun, but having reached my destination, I was obliged to leave them discussing the merits of the case.





BUT dear me! by what a long stretch we have been letting the omnibus get ahead, rolling along and carrying inside it our timid little beau, who is pluckily making for the goal I so ignominiously abandoned.

“Is she a matron of Cornelia’s mien,
Or the light air of Egypt’s graceful queen,
Profuse of joy?” . . .

Is she a beautiful and (therefore) dowerless maiden, or

a buxom wealthy widow, or a spinster whose charms are only metallic? Young or elderly (to put it mildly), graceful or clumsy, tall or short? Is she handsome or is she plain?—but that is another idle question; another case of relative terms. Beauty, at all events, is subjective, and fortunately!—What a world it would be if we were all liable to admire, and perhaps to court, the same individual; whereas, as it is, we stand in amaze before the idol our neighbour has been pleased to enshrine. “What on earth can he see in that woman!” we exclaim as soon as we hear that A has engaged himself to Z. “What on earth can she see in that man!” is the corresponding exclamation of the other sex; but let us proceed with the case before us. Now only look at that fellow’s face, all ye who can read the autograph of Nature: you see at once that he is not a man of the world, he has not learnt to command the external expression of his countenance, and every feature tells its tale. Look! you can trace upon it the very words in which he is trying to give form to his “proposals;” I can follow every term he first thinks will, and then fancies won’t, do to express all he feels on the subject. See, now he is in imagination rehearsing his part; only, each time he reaches the middle of his speech, his mind misgives him as to how it will be met on the other side, and how the reply will affect what he had prepared as the rejoinder, and then he starts afresh only to find himself in a new perplexity.

Poor little fellow! How simple, how *naïf* he appears to an old stager like myself! So trembling now in her merely *imagined* presence, while—if he should go through

with it, and she should accept him—perhaps before two years are over their head, he will be suing her in the Divorce Court with half-a-dozen real or suspected correspondents! “Circumstances alter cases,” truly predicate the sagacious copy-books:

“Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch’s *wife*,
He would have written sonnets all his life?”

—but the hapless *prétendant* becomes more and more agitated, and by way of working off some of his apprehensions and alarms, gives a final and altogether superfluous tug to his tight-fitting gloves; two more buttons, as an inevitable consequence, take themselves off, though love being blind, of course he couldn’t be expected to foresee this obvious result. The poor wretch looks round with a deprecating glance, accompanied by a desperate conviction of his incompleteness; but it sometimes happens that good comes out of evil, and he suddenly brightens as if inspired by a saving thought. I feel it is the identical idea which has flashed across my own brain—Why not make capital of this very misfortune? *L’occasion est toute trouvée*.—“Angelina, my angel! you see this glove; with the ‘g’ off, it expresses my sentiment for your sweet self; with the ‘g’ on, you see in it the living evidence of many things; first that two gloves and two loves each make a pair (you know the more twaddle a man pours out on such an occasion, the more a girl admires him); secondly, its buttonlessness is a confirmation of the undeniable Bible truth that it is “not good for man to be alone,” seeing that he is miserably incapable of sewing on

these needed adjuncts; useless, forlorn, miserably dependent therefore is he on woman, for love and sympathy—and buttons.” He is so agitated that the bathos doesn’t strike him a bit, all he thinks of is that he has found a clue to the labyrinth in which he had lost his way. He begins to hope; it is the right hand glove too; every trifle



affords a portent when we are nervously anxious about anything we have at stake.

The Romans of old were very superstitious about the *dexter* and *sinister* beginnings of their undertakings, and thought it lucky if they chanced to set out on a journey *dextro pede*: thus Apuleius:

“*Sinistro pede profectum, spes me frustrata est,*”

or Juvenal—

“*Quid tam dextro pede concipis,*” &c.

and many more.

Our little friend therefore is on the right tack, and as the omnibus pulls up at his nod, and he alights with a free, elastic step, I wish him, mentally, good speed, though I shall never know (nor therefore will you) whether he pursues his scheme to the sweet, or perhaps the "bitter end."

His place is very soon taken by a tall, spare, gentlemanly but aged man, whose worn but refined features, bowed form and manifest feebleness, suggest astonishment that those about him should trust his tottering steps to his own guidance: perhaps he has none left—so cruel is often Fate—none to watch over and guard his declining days as in his more vigorous time he protected their feebler years. Suddenly he looks up after a drowsy interval, and appears to discover he is near his destination; for he intimates by a helpless and mute appeal to those nearest him that he would be glad to communicate with the conductor; he tries, but ineffectually, more than once to rise by his own strength, then stretches his arm to reach the bar above him, but the now relaxed muscles of that once powerful limb no longer serve, and he must be reconciled to the melancholy fact that the force he once employed for others no less than for himself, has abandoned him; he drops back into his corner, but he is not willingly baffled, and it is only to take a moment's repose; he rises once more, this time with the help of a plain silver-headed cane, and succeeds in getting on his feet: it is a pathetic sight; all those are, which suggest

to us our own impending fragility. As he makes for the door with uncertain step, my first impulse is to raise my hand and offer its help; but I pause: it is one of those delicate cases in which one feels one may be equally at fault whether in helping or in desisting therefrom. The inspired writer might have added to the numerous instances in which he tries to inculcate the valuable science of tact—"There is a time to help and a time to abstain from helping:" in other words—*In all your dealings with others, be guided by circumstances.* But that's not the point; no one will deny the *fact*, the art consists in discerning *when* all these "times" are, and how they are to be recognised. As I look more scrutinisingly at the departing passenger, and notice upon his forehead an honourable scar, I make up my mind that he is a retired officer who has seen service, possibly a General, though I can't go so far as to guess how high his promotions have carried him: a friend of mine, then a full General, once told me that when in sea-side apartments, previously to his ultimate promotion, a friend having called on him, and asking whether General Blank was at home, his landlady, indignant at her lodger's being deprived of any portion of his accurate style and title, answered in a tone and with a stress calculated to correct the offender, "*Major-General Blank is hout, sir.*"



My supposed "General" gives me the idea of a man long accustomed to command, and not broken in to dependence on others; and I fear to humiliate him by any implied perception of the failure of his powers, so withhold my hesitating hand, mentally reverting to an invaluable page in that wonderful volume which abounds in practical lessons of life—Gil Blas—and remembering how that novice's *naïf* honesty was recompensed by his inconsistent master the Archbishop of Granada; nor am I unmindful of an equally instructive if perhaps less familiar anecdote, in the life of Lord Brougham, who having inadvertently dropped his hat while reading a letter of introduction presented to him as he was on the point of going out, by a young gentleman, the latter rushed to pick it up and offer it to him. This unfortunate act of intended politeness was, however, by no means appreciated by the noble lord, who received it very resentfully, and it cost the young aspirant pretty dear, for his lordship bowed him out and never more did the expectant youth hear anything of him. Lord Brougham, it seems, had not learned to grow old gracefully, and did not relish forestalling the moment when he should be no longer able to pick up his own hat; but then you know he had a reputation for grumpiness: witness Sydney Smith's characteristic remark when he saw him driving in the carriage which had his cypher on the panel, "There goes Lord Brougham's carriage with a great 'B' outside and a great wasp inside." By way of parenthesis I may mention here as good a story, of which this reminds me, though of a minor wit, of whom, one day, an M.D. asked

what he thought of his new carriage which he had had painted yellow.

"Well, I thought," was the reply, "that it looked very much like a mustard-pot with the spoon in it."

To return, there is an infinite art in being polite without being officious, and we should do well to consider Talleyrand's moral sedative, freely employed by that innate tactician to calm down the unreflecting enthusiasm which led away the promotion-seekers of his day: "*Pas de zèle, Messieurs; surtout, pas de zèle.*"

The fact is that in all the circumstances of life in which we have to deal with others, the grand secret is *tact*: nor is it too much to qualify it as the most valuable personal attribute we can cultivate; not merely for the advantages it gives us and for that general success which can never be attained without it, but for our own self-respect in our intercourse with our fellow-men; and yet how utterly neglected is its acquisition in every code of education.

With some, tact seems to be an inherent qualification of their nature—a cradle-gift the most precious a fairy-godmother can bestow on new-born humanity of either sex; but in those who lack it not altogether, or in whom it is latent, surely it can be instilled and fostered in the one case, and developed in the other. It is a great science to know exactly how to comport oneself in all circumstances and on all occasions: a man of the world is at once recognised by his manifestation of *savoir-vivre*, acquired in his familiar intercourse with society: when we see a man neatly extricate himself from a difficulty in which he is placed for the first time in his life, we

cannot help entertaining a favourable opinion of the training which has given him this social presence of mind ; and history has not disdained to record instances in which such acts have been the starting-point of the fortunes of men who have finally attained the highest human goal.

If Sir Walter Raleigh won the favour of Queen Eliza-



beth by that happy alacrity of thought, which whispered to him to sacrifice his velvet mantle in the royal service, and by its means obtained the coveted notice of his sovereign, French history records an occasion on which the approval and esteem of the *Grand Monarque* were gained by that Ambassador, who, on the King's making way (out of courtesy to the female sovereign he represented) for him to enter first the royal carriage, did not hesitate to respond

to the implied command, accompanying the act with the subtle remark, "*Sire, je vous obéis.*" Numberless other traits of this kind are on record; but while speaking of this Envoy, I may as well relate another and equally characteristic trait I have read of him, which seems to demonstrate that besides being a finished courtier he was a very original metaphysician and philosopher. Reflecting on the grand mystery of creation, he declared "the conception to be so majestic that it could only have emanated from a Divine source, and that a God alone could have designed it; *but,*" he quaintly added, "it has since got into such a terrible muddle that one can only suppose He must have died in the middle of His work, and that the devil seized on the opportunity and finished it."

But we are forgetting the old General whom we left making his way to the door, where he now stands very prudently hesitating to put his foot on the step till the vehicle has stopped; *mirabile dictu*, the conductor watches and does not hurry him; conductors, as a rule, are not refined, nor generally given to the exhibition of much politeness or consideration; perhaps they possess both, but consider it more convenient to repress all demonstration of feeling: on this occasion the sight of the noble form reduced to move with feeble steps, and the white locks on that bowed head, seems to touch whatever substitute for a heart there may be beating under that greasy waistcoat; the conductor therefore, tamed for the moment, generously and disinterestedly proffers his coat-sleeve, banister-fashion, quite like a gentleman's servant; he may once have passed through that phase, and it may be the uncon-

scious recurrence of an old habit : as the General retires he remarks, looking after him—

“That’s a rale gent, that is, maybe a horficer ; anyways there ain’t nothink one-’orse about ’im, there ain’t :” but omnibus servants, being at the service of the public, can’t afford to indulge in over-politeness, and we drive on leaving the venerable passenger standing forlorn, helpless, and bewildered in the middle of the road at the mercy of any cab, carriage, or cart that may happen to want the spot he occupies. I watch him with interest, as he timidly crosses the stones looking warily each way the while, and it is with considerable satisfaction I see that fine martial but now infirm figure securely across the kerb.

“He’s safe for this time,” I say to myself with a sigh of relief, as he walks steadily on, while two stout elderly women make their way past me and settle themselves into their places—women of the Gamp and Harris type, and garrulous accordingly. One of them must have been in the midst of relating a personal experience to the other, for she immediately resumed it—

“Well, where was I?” said she, trying to collect her scattered senses,—“Ah, I remember now, I was a saying as when my sister ’Arriet (who was own maid to Lady Caroline Lamb) ’ad left ’er ladyship’s service, she and me we set up business as milliners under ’er ladyship’s patronage. Well, you see, as we was ’ard at work hall the week, we hindulged ourselves a bit on Sundays ; so one Sunday I’d got a novel as I was reading, and I sat myself down in a harmchair by the fire after breakfast, to go hon with

it, for it was that hinteresting I couldn't 'a put it down for the life of me—so 'Arriet she says to me—'Sairey,' says she, 'd'you know the time? because I think we ought to be gettin' ready for church.' 'Hall right,' I says, 'hall in good time,' and I went on a reading. Presently



she goes at it again; 'Sairey, I'm dressed, and 'ere's your things, 'adn't you better be putting on 'em hon?' for she'd been a fidgettin' about for the last hour. 'Oh bother,' I says, 'if you're ready, you can go, don't stop for me.' 'What!' she screams out, 'you don't mean you're agoin' to give up your church, this blessed Sunday?'

“‘What’s that to you?’ says I, angry at the interruption, ‘my soul’s my own; I shall go to church when I choose and I shall stay away when I choose, it hain’t nothink to nobody, and if I don’t go to-day, it’ll be all along o’ your teasin’ of me about it—there!’

“But the reel fact was, I was so taken hup with that book, for I’d just got to where the young lady ’adn’t met her lover and was on the point of taking poison, and I couldn’t have left her in that there pickle, no, not for nothing; so off went ’Arriet, not a bit pleased, and I sat there, not exactly enjoying my book, ’cos it did go a bit again my conscience, but I went on a readin’ all the same till I yeared the clock go twelve, and then a course it were too late to think about it. By-and-by in comes ’Arriet from church; she was hall right again now, and the fust thing she says to me was—

“‘O Sairey, you *will* be sorry you didn’t come to church; there was a lady sat in the pew before me, as ’ad on such a love of a bonnet! the very thing we want for Lady Caroline. It was made of a rich Genoa velvet, deep crimson, and the shape quite noo, just over from Paris, I’ll be bound—and the trimmins! Oh dear, they was beautiful; I noo I shouldn’t remember ’em, so I made a sketch of the whole thing in the fly-leaf of my prayer-book; see, there was a whirligig here and a fizzigig there, and a piping round the hedge, and a bow with hends at top, and on one side a feather, and on the hother a flower, and the *tootonsomble* was perfect; I do wish you could ’a seen it, not but what this is quite correck, for I looked well hat it hall the time.’

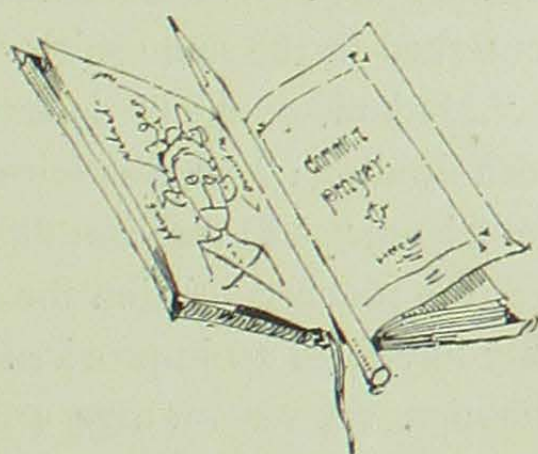
"I waited quite patient till she got to the hend, and then I says quite grave—'Now, 'Arriet,' says I, 'you was very hangry with me becos I wouldn't go to church, and thought me very wicked, but I should like you to tell me which you honestly think is wusser, me a sitting at 'ome a readin' a good moral book, or you agoin' to church and *seemin'* to be sayin' your prayers, while all the time you're sketchin' a velvet bonnet and trimmins on the fly-leaf of your prayer-book?'" And then I stopped, and looked at her like this; and the old woman illustrated it by striking an attitude into which she threw a good deal of frown.

"And what *did* she say?" asked the other party who had (like myself) listened with great attention.

"She said," replied the first speaker—"Sairey," says she, 'I stands corrected.'

"Well," replied the listener, when the narrator had arrived at this consummation, "I'm not at all sure 'Arriet *wasn't* right; I 'old with goin' to church even if you don't attend all the time; there's a deal done by hexample, and if we all stayed at home and read moral books, why there 'd be nobody in the churches but the parson and the clurk."

I can't say how much further this theme would have been pursued, nor with what result, for just at that moment a sudden vibration—yea, something more than a vibration—startled us all with a common terror, which soon began



to be variously expressed on the countenances, as well as by the voices of the patients, as we were subjected to the bump—thump—clatter—scramble—and final crash of something, we knew not what; but, as it is natural, especially in such a case, to take *omne ignotum pro terribili*, the disturbance appeared considerably more serious than it proved. The ejaculations all round were characteristic of the individuals. “Let us pray,” said the scripture-reader in the corner, thinking himself as in duty bound to improve the occasion, and on hearing the stout lady shrieking out in accents of despair and Yankeeism—“Oh my! oh my! Whar *du* we all be gwine to?” he calmly remarked in the same spirit—

“Madam, that will depend entirely on the life you’ve been leading:” while Sairey observed complacently to her friend, “Ah! we *was* talking about church.” But there was too much confusion for discourse or we should probably have had an improvised sermon upon this theme on the spot. A scream here, a shout there, “Mussy on us!” from one old woman, “The Lord save us!” from another, simultaneously uttered amid hysterical sobs, indicative of consternation and confusion (the whole got up in an incredibly short time), made it difficult to ascertain what really had happened to try the nerves of some and the tempers of others. Yet now the vehicle was at a complete standstill, and moreover in an upright position, it became obvious that in spite of the noise, nothing very serious could have happened.

Of course there was a crowd at once. It is surprising with what rapidity a collection of idle, curious, useless and

encumbering individuals will contrive to assemble on the slightest provocation in a London thoroughfare. In this case they all seemed terribly disappointed that there was nothing to detain them—

"'Old yer row in there, will yer?" exclaims one near the door, which was completely surrounded. "What yer got to make such a kick-up about, and nothink arter all but a 'orse down?" vociferates another. An Irish "coster" more gallant, appeared touched with sympathy for the fat old woman who was struggling with her bundles and umbrella at the door.

"Will I help yer down, Missis?" he says, "I recognise yer feelin's."

"'Elp me down? In course that's what I want," she replied; but he was roughly pushed away before he could get at the handle of the door, so that, blocking up the window, she continued to exclaim—

"Let me hout, let me hout, I say; 'ere, conductor, conductor!" then an octave higher, and with a distinct elevation of voice in the last syllable, "Conduc—tor!—Where's that villain gone?"

"Why, he's a seein' arter the 'orse, you needn't to stir; it's hall right," interposed one of those officious (but not to be despised) fellows who always seem to know what to do and generally form an element in a London accident, and he was about right. Of course the sudden shock could not but startle us all, unprepared as we were for it; but why, I asked myself, unprepared? How is it that, instead of once in a way, these and similar accidents don't happen every day and all day

long? I am an inveterate employer of omnibuses, and yet I may say that in the whole course of my acquaintance with those vehicles, I have never, with the exception of this and one previous occasion, experienced such an occurrence.

The horse, we find, has been flogged up, and although somewhat shaky, poor wretch, is again on all fours, and now the conductor stands on his perch once more, and



is attending to his own department very much as if nothing unusual had happened. "Charin' Cross, lady, I think you said?" he observes, addressing the Transatlantic passenger, who is still eagerly seeking to descend.

"You'll be letting me down this instant," she reiterates, as she pushes her way with determination and tries to pass him.

"Hullo, I say," exclaims he, "this 'ere won't do. Where's yer fare, Missis?"

"Fare, indeed! Wal, that du whip everything! Fare! when you'd all but skedaddled us all into the next world! Fare!" she repeated, "now that's what I call big impident: guess *unfair's* more like it. Let me pass, I say."

"Come now," urges the man, "none 'o that air,

you've no call to complain. You'd 'ad your twopennor'th afore the 'orse went down. 'Charin' Cross,' you says, and I've brought yer to Charin' Cross right and tight, and now you pay yer tuppence—or I'll give yer in charge," he adds, bravely and conclusively, as by a singular stroke of luck he spies a policeman close at hand. That unusual apparition seems to produce a wonderful effect; for, though not without further protest, the coin is ultimately handed over, and the lady departs, weakly vowing vengeance.

At Charing Cross all the passengers have alighted except myself, and an entirely new cargo has taken their relinquished seats.

"How like life and its strange, weird changes!" I mentally exclaim. How often, alas, is it not the lot of man to look round and see a fresh set of beings forming the home of which he still remains the nucleus!

Once that home circle was composed of father, mother, brothers and sisters, intermingled, perhaps, occasionally with cousins and school-fellows.

Later on, not one of these remains; whither have they vanished?

"All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, and some—are dead!"

but one solitary surviving life has been somehow spared and patched up, and the places once occupied around him by these dispersed ones have become the natural and familiar places of a second generation; instead of parents, brothers, sisters—are wife, sons,

daughters, and *their* cousins and school-fellows, usurping with the most unconscious complacency the relinquished privileges and possessions of those who preceded them; but it is not for long—a few short years and these too have disappeared. He who was once a boy at that very hearth and had there become a man, has now graduated into a patriarch, but he still retains his place, and again looks on a *new* set of faces. His wife is in the grave, his children have left the paternal nest and have settled far away, and it is now his grandchildren who have replaced the preceding occupiers. And—so strangely adaptable is the human mind—he has been able *tant bien que mal* to reconstruct his life and reconcile himself to these successive transmutations; to survive the seasons of separation with their inroads of grief, which at the time he said—and thought—he should never get over, and to accept the compensations he has found, or thinks he has found, as one act has followed another in the drama of his life.

Is not the existence of man (“For ever changing—unperceived the change”) like our journey in a public carriage? How many of those with whom we start remain beside us to its close?

The spot where the best days of my childhood were spent rises before me; what was “the village” then, is a large, busy, and important town now! I and mine knew and were known by every family who had a seat in the neighbourhood, by every respectable inhabitant in the place. What a change now! I am not a *very* old man, I assure you, and yet the last time I visited it (and it will

be the "last," for I shall never have the heart to go there again)—

. . . . all, all were gone!—
The old familiar faces

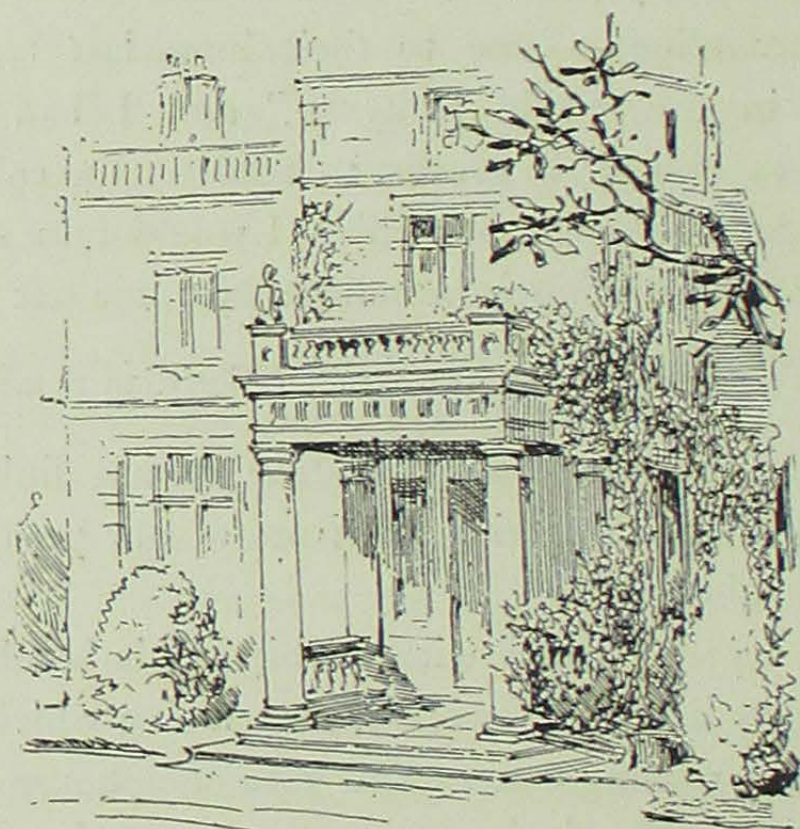
haunted me like spectres, for not one was there to give me a welcome. Gone! all gone! and their places knew them no more; gone!—some to new homes, some to a life of joy and luxury, more to one of trials and sorrows among new surroundings—some to their long, last rest under the sod in the "auld kirkyard," and I had not the courage to visit their graves, to read on the cold, moss-grown stone those names which I would fain still associate with their living personality: Not one left

"To call me by my own familiar Christian name!"

to respond to that fond question which links us so closely with the lingering survivors of our youth—"Do you remember?"

I met a young fellow with a whip in his hand habited in a riding dress, and whistling to a dog which frisked about him, coming out of the gate of a house where a loving hospitality during many long and happy years, had made the very walls of that second home dear to me—dear, ay, "dear as remembered kisses after death." I accosted him,—I couldn't help it,—and I am sure there were tears in my voice (though he was probably too full of joyous youth to notice it) as I asked him with what courage I could command—"Is there any one of the name of Chamberlain living here?" "Chamberlain!" he repeated, not as if he hadn't heard me, but as people

will when the word represents an utterly unknown quantity; "Chamberlain!—well, no," he didn't think there was any one of that name in all Lambridge, and he passed on and threw his whip ahead for the dog to pick up; *he* didn't care, of course not; why should he?—but to me those careless words were like a stab! No one of that name left! the very nomenclature had ceased to be



recognised, and yet the old house away down the drive, as I peered at it through the trees, stood there as of yore, looking so homelike, so inviting that the sight of it carried me back in imagination to my careless boyhood's days and held me spell-bound to the spot, till I could almost make myself believe it was only last night I was careering along the old shining oak floor, in Sir Roger de

Coverley with Annie, sweet, beautiful little Annie, for my partner !—And where was *she* ?—I didn't dare trust myself to ask any more questions ; for when I came to think of it I knew that *that* Annie, my seventeen-year-old Annie, must have faded out of the page of existence for ever,—lost and vanished

Among the dreams of the days that were !

and that if that personality still survived she would be wholly unrecognisable in the staid, elderly matron whose silver bands would never recall my little Annie's golden curls ; whose wrinkled forehead would form a ghastly contrast to her clear, smooth brow ; whose dim, tear-worn eyes, no longer radiant with heaven's own blue, must long since have lost their witchery along with the long, dark lashes which gave them such a soft expression when she blushed, as she often did, "at the praise of her own loveliness."

My memories of the loved companions of my youth came mingled with remembrances of some—ay, one in particular—for whom I entertained feelings of an altogether adverse nature, one who ventured to cast his shadow across my path and to come "between me and what I (then) deemed my happiness." I recall with compunction now the bitter hatred which took possession of my heart when I was told by an amiable friend that he presumed to share my admiration for my little Annie. I regret that hatred now (though I considered it justified at the time), because the poor fellow has long ceased to be, and I cannot maintain animosity beyond the grave.

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonus*," as that young gentleman observed who was always so very careful to be correct in his citations:—

"*Num*, sir, *num*," whispered a friend.

"Ha, yes," replied he complacently, "yes, I used to think so myself once, but I have since observed that the insurance offices always call it '*bonus*,' and they must be right, you know."

As to my rival therefore—"Peace to his ashes." I believe this is correct, though they say that it stands quoted on Soyer's tombstone "*Peas to his hash*," and below it "*Soyez tranquille*."

I will no further pursue this harrowing retrospect of my past life. Retrospects must always be sad, are generally unprofitable, and therefore carefully to be shunned: the mind is naturally given to form its judgment of by-gone events on the knowledge it has since acquired, and to indulge in the bitterest self-reproach for short-sightedness, for which it could in no possible way be responsible.

I don't think it would have occurred to me to address to Heaven that negative prayer of the royal sage, against poverty and riches alike; mine would be "Give me back my lost opportunities:—

'Oh for *yesterdays* to come!'—

accompanied by the knowledge I now possess—knowledge of the world, knowledge of attendant circumstances, knowledge of myself." I wouldn't be unreasonable enough to ask for knowledge of consequences, because

I think, with all those other knowledges, I ought to be able to bring that contingent myself.

To self-tormentors who, when they have got into a mess, go mad over what they call their own folly, but what is really only want of these knowledges, I would say,—

1. Never reproach yourself with any past act, provided you went to work conscientiously, and to the best of your judgment at the time.

2. Never fret over a *fait accompli*:—If it can be helped, help it: if it can't be helped, forget it.

“Difficult!” of course it is; it is only to be done by a strong will—a strong and persevering will. I know a touching story of a little child, whose pet canary was found dead in its cage: when her judicious mother thought sufficient indulgence had been allowed to sensibility, she said tenderly, “My dear child, you mustn't cry any more; your tears cannot bring the little bird back.”

“No, mother dear,” answered the child through her sobs, “Sybil knows it's no use, but Sybil *must* cry.” The feeling is natural, but grown men and women have to fight nature.

There are people who delight in

Communing with the ghosts of their departed joys.

I don't; to me

Joy's recollection is no longer joy,
while

Sorrow's remembrance is a sorrow still.

But there's no accounting for tastes; let each one take his pleasure where he can find it and hug his grievance

if he be so minded. Were I to dwell on these themes I should only become mournful and metaphysical, for I have often and often tried to think out what becomes of our past states and their deeds—of the living, breathing, palpable and (though only temporary) concrete phases of strength and activity, through which every created thing successively and insensibly glides in its passage through life—those tangible phases they seem to leave behind them at each stage, but which really melt into the next to be never again seen.

You are called to a distant colony and leave behind you your child—a beautiful boy, innocent as the angels, and as perfect in form and colour as those pictured representations. You return some fifteen years later, and what do you find in place of the little loving, trustful infant whose image you have treasured in your heart ever since?

There he stands :—no wonder you don't know him, and ask impatiently what he does there : that mutinous, surly, headstrong young man taller than yourself, stronger than you are now, bearded and cigarred, who has his own views of life and of you, and has already broken his mother's heart—a spendthrift, a smoker, a drinker, a gambler—*que sais je ?* a fellow who cares for no opinion, respects no law, holds nothing sacred.

How is it possible those hardened, bloated, self-centred features can be the outcome of that fair, heavenly cherub-face you so well remember kissing through your mutual tears on that far-off day when you and he parted on that very spot ! Whither has that material, and alas ! too, that moral beauty gone ?—gone without leaving so much

as a trace behind! Has nothing of it remained? Alas! nothing: nothing that we can discern or discover; and behold, is not all life, as we look back upon it through the vista of years, with all the dear ones who moved about in it, "like a dream when one awaketh"?

D'Israeli says, "I doubt whether a man be the same material being at fifty that he was at twenty-five;" and I doubt whether physiologists are not unanimous on that point. Are there not philosophers who would assert that the individual is *morally* not the same; and if he be not, what a vast field for casuistry the possibility opens up! How and at what period are we to determine his responsibility? Is he answerable at fifty for a crime committed at twenty-five, and for which he himself condemns that younger self as if he were judging another man?

When we hear him spoken of as "the man who committed—say—a forgery, five and twenty years ago," we ought perhaps to correct the speaker, and say, "Nay, that wasn't the man you see before you now, that was his former self, or rather one of his former selves." It is hard to think this way of putting it would make no impression on the administrators of the law, and that he would get judged, condemned, and punished just the same as if he *were* what unphilosophical people would consider the very identical individual, and would shun as such!

Again, does the ingenious and *bizarre* author we have just quoted, shrewdly remark—"Mankind are constantly starting at events they consider extraordinary, but a

philosopher acknowledges only one miracle—life.” And well he may, for who has yet ever satisfactorily accounted for its origin? Truly *that* is a comprehensive miracle, including every other; like the rod of Moses in its serpent shape swallowing up all the rods of the magicians: yet, however mysteriously, they were still there, though in another form—

“ Il tempo tutto toglie e tutto dà
Ogni cosa si muta, nulla si annichila,”

or more compendiously in English—

All things are but altered,
Nothing dies. . . .

I must record here a curious illustration of the freaks of time, and though it is one of those which time must needs play every day, we don't often stop to notice its contrasts and effects, for it is only juxtaposition that brings them into prominence.

One day, in Paris, visiting at the house of the Provençal novelist Marius Roux (pronounced according to Southern idiom, Rousse), I happened to notice on the wall of his *salon* a handsome gilt frame containing two life-size pictures of a boy and a girl each aged about four years. While I was examining them the nurse appeared bringing in his little daughter, in whom I immediately recognised the original of one of these portraits. Turning to Madame Roux, I asked whether the little one had a twin brother.

“That little boy is not her brother,” replied she; “that is the portrait of my husband at four years old, and he

had our little girl painted at the same age in order to frame them side by side ; but," she added, "it is difficult to make her understand that that is 'papa,' for she is always asking where that little boy is, and why she cannot have him for a play-fellow." A mind of four years' growth could hardly have a more puzzling problem to solve, and it would be a wise child indeed that recognised its own father under *those* circumstances.

I could tell of an occasion when at a much more advanced age (and not even after dinner), I myself got puzzled in a matter of personal identity, with much less excuse for the mistake.

It happened thus : I was walking calmly down Bond Street one day, when I saw a lady in mourning attire standing on the kerb, driving a hard little bargain with a Hansom cabman ; the back of her pretty little crape mantle was towards me, and I had no sooner caught sight of that and a very neat little black-gloved hand holding a black silk parasol, than I recognised in all these accessories my young sister, to whom I thought it would be funny to give a harmless surprise ; so stepping up to her, I put my hand slyly round her waist, exclaiming at the same time—

"That'll do, my little dear, *I'll* make the bargain ; you jump in and I'll follow."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when "my sister," turning her head, gave a sharp yell—so utterly unlike her!—but so, alas! was the face! If *men* ever screamed, I should certainly have scared the people as far off as S. Paul's, so horrified was I. Shall I ever forget that face?

No, dear reader, *not* because it was so beautiful, but because it was so *expressive*—yes, expressive of fury, spite, indignation, and anything else of that kind you like to add.

What did I do?—well, that's more than I can tell you, for I never knew. What, I! A steady, sedate, discreet old bachelor, proper to a degree, to have clasped a strange young woman's waist, and called her "my little dear!" All I *can* tell you about it is that "when I came to myself," as the novelists say, I looked about and saw I had somehow or other got to Charing Cross, where I had no business whatever, and that I was still rushing madly on at a pace altogether inconsistent with dignity, and if I hadn't happened to meet a friend who arrested my steps, I should probably be still pelting away to this hour. After that humiliating blunder I went about for months with my eyes on the ground, terrified every time I passed a woman in black, lest I should unwittingly hail more "sisters."

It is curious, though, how subjective all things are, and how the same act becomes highly inadmissible on some occasions, and yet, so to speak, absolutely obligatory on others. Being an unspliced fellow, I have of course constantly found myself in great requisition at social gatherings, and have been perfectly well aware that men in my position have no business at balls, unless they choose to assume the character of *cavalier*; that in fact the lady of the house expects them to assist in "keeping the ball going," in other words to take their share of the dancing. Now dancing at the present day means round-dancing, and round-dancing means clasping round the waist as

many young ladies as you have a fancy to embrace: the only difference between that commission of the act and the reprehensible one of treating a "sister" in a similar way, being the omission of that lisping whisper which delicately breathes two names—(so delicately that each party only hears his and her own)—and is termed "an introduction." After that brief ceremony is over, you may hug the girl as closely as you please—in the best, oh yes, the *very* best society—and nobody thinks any harm of it!

Some years ago, when dancing was an amusement of a far milder character and English girls kept their partners at a much more respectful distance than now, I remember assisting at a ball where two sisters—rather fast girls—so fast indeed



that they had got quite in advance of the age—ventured to transgress the ordinary bounds, and allowed their *danseurs* to considerably shorten the regulation distance.

"Did you see the two Misses G—— last night?" said a friend to me the next morning: "they were quite a spectacle."

"Ay," said I, "they were—a *pair* of spectacles."

Ah! We have gone on rapidly since those days, we have fully caught up the Misses G—— and apparently have not done going on yet.

I have been told by an old friend of mine, a Fellow of New College, Oxford, long since dead, that he was at the opera the first time a ballet—then a new importation from France—was ever given in London. The dresses of the performers were far less *décolletées* (both ways) in cut and far more draping in character than now, yet the moment the curtain rose there was something like a subdued murmur through the house; but when the *entrechats* and *pirouettes* and other *tours de force* of the fair creatures displaced the length and breadth of the, even then, too scanty skirt, something more sibilant was heard, which went on increasing in vehemence until the management had no resource but to drop the curtain.

The next opera-night, the audience had determined to again express their disapprobation if the offence were repeated; but the manager probably had discovered that prudence was the better part of valour, and that it was to his interest to conform to public taste, so hems or tucks or whatever they are called had been “let down,” and the skirts fell fully *à mijambe*. The public was appeased, and those who are old enough to have sat under (or even over) Taglioni, Cerito, Ellsler, Carlotta Grisi, &c., will remember the modest proportions of the costumes worn by those queens of grace and elegance.

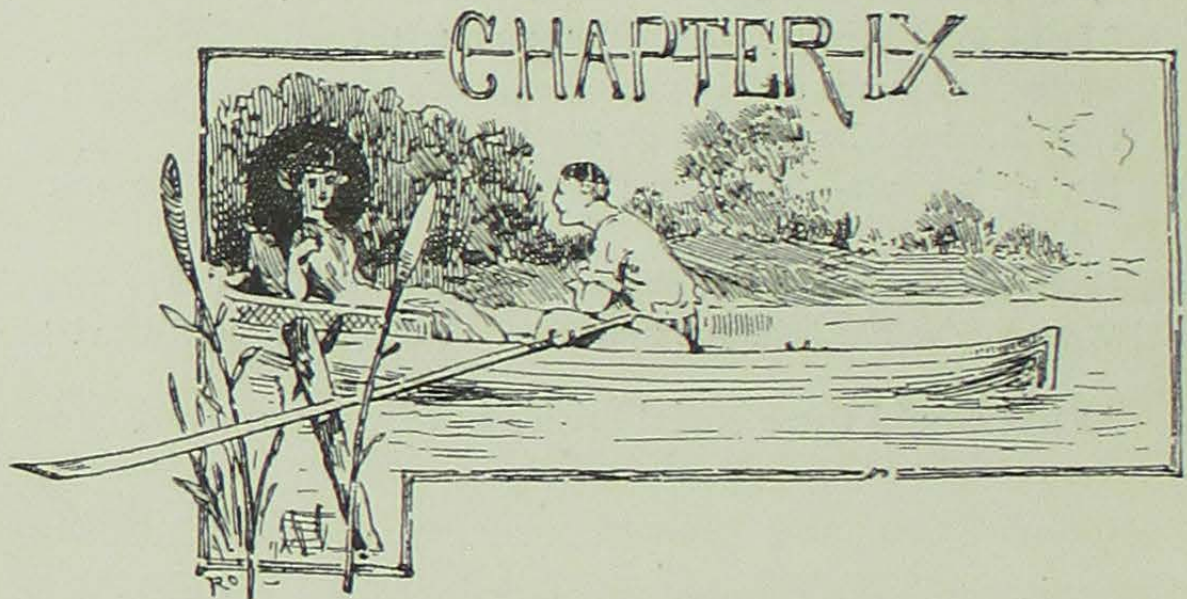
And yet it was in days when public as well as private dancing was kept within these decorous limits, that Byron could find occasion to write his eloquent condemnation of

"The Waltz," and that those terse and expressive lines could have appeared which I can remember well enough to cite, though the name of their author—a baronet—has escaped me:

"What! the girl that I love by another embraced!
The balm of her lip shall another man taste?
Be touched in the whirl by another man's knee,
Shall her head be reclined on another than me!
Sir, she's yours—from the grape you have brushed the soft
blue
From the rosebud you've shaken the fresh morning dew,
What you've touched, you may take. Pretty waltzer, Adieu!"

What would these social critics have written *now*?





"*Complet*"—notices—Why have we not an equivalent?—A Matrimonial Squabble—Love-matches—Their probable result—Philosophy—Experience—How often is it of any use?—Juvenal, Valerius Maximus, Socrates—All set at naught—The Tower of Babel—Raising the Voice—Dangerous, sometimes—"Young ladies"—Their audacious "costumes"—Girls of the same class in France—"Education"—The consequences of "a little learning"—Fronts and Postiches—Is a man no older than he looks?—Ninon de l'Enclos—Diane de Poitiers—The real "*âge ingrat*"—Patching nature—Dyed Hair—Cheating Death—A Viennese idea—Beauty without intelligence—Is it Beauty?—A Railway accident—Where?—Locality makes all the difference—What we see and what we only hear of—Vivisection—A vivisectionary operation photographed—Its effect—A vivisectionary suggestion.

WHILST we have been pausing to moralise, the vehicle has also been pausing to collect not its thoughts but its passengers; perhaps, but that is doubtful, to give the fallen horse a breathing moment. However, the places are now all full again, and I can't help wondering why the English 'bus-owners don't more universally supply their

conductors with a compendious and significant little tablet inscribed with an English equivalent to the word "*complet*," to notify to candidates for admission that they may spare themselves the trouble of applying, merely to learn from the lips of the conductor the somewhat equivocally expressed fact—"I'm full hinside, I ham."

Among the new passengers I observe two, engaged in carrying on a *sotto voce* squabble, and perceive them to be a not ill-dressed couple—a couple, who in fact would be styled "respectable," but whose scowling expression as they address each other betrays not only that they are not a man and woman of the world (for they have not acquired that difficult art so indispensable in a civilised community, of commanding their countenances and concealing their feelings), but that they must be husband and wife, though I have observed brother and sister when they live together, also often lead what is termed a "cat and dog life." On these occasions I cease to lament my bachelorhood and I say to myself it is perhaps after all "good for man to be alone."



As the colloquy goes on, I wonder whether these two spiteful combatants ever did form a "happy couple," and I don't think it altogether impossible, present appearances notwithstanding. They are probably the victims of that woeful mistake—a "love-match;" remark, I

don't speak from personal experience but from observation and also from the law reports, and it is thus that I know how frequently the romances of the Divorce-Court are the outcome of "love-matches." Take at a venture any one of those reported in to-day's *Times*, and go back into the antecedents of the couple fighting tooth and nail, regardless of expense, and worse still, regardless of exposure, to get rid of each other, and ninety-nine to one you will find they began their matrimonial career by running away with each other, setting at defiance all authority—but *that*, of course—all advice, even the most disinterested, all entreaty, all filial affection, all prudence, all common sense!—Well indeed did Madame de Stael say, "L'amour c'est un égoïsme à deux!" so blind is Love, so tyrannical his power!

" Qui que tu sois, voilà ton maître
Il le fut, il l'est, ou il le doit être,"

and what man, who has ever been the slave of the wily little god whose treacherous steps approach us so pitifully and with such winning subtlety—"βρέφος εἰμὶ, μὴ φόβησαι"—that he suspects no harm,—can lay his hand on his heart and assert that he never uttered that modest prayer—

" Ye gods ! Annihilate all time and space
And make two faithful lovers happy " ?

Why can't men leave their future to be worked out by the Power which placed them where they are: their position may be a dreary one, but they only get into a worse mess by trying, as the servants (poor ignorant things !) say, to "better" themselves.

. "si consilium vis
Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus quid
Conveniat nobis rebusque sit utile nostris."

Valerius Maximus tells us that this was also the sentiment of Socrates, and undoubtedly of a great many other philosophers; but Lord help us! what has Love to do with Philosophy? What has Love to say even to Experience? No. Depend upon it, whatever may be thought of the value of experience, it is about the most useless of all the



phases we have to go through: it is not only useless to others but it is useless to ourselves, and there is nothing more fallacious than the solace we fall back upon after we have felt the consequences of an act of folly, commonly expressed thus—"Well, I shall know better another time." Who, I should like to hear, ever knew that "other time" to come, or if it did come, to come in such a way as to bring him the smallest chance of profiting by his former dearly-bought experience?

Does any subsequent circumstance in our lives ever arise that bears any analogy to that "time" before, when we thought it might prove "useful" to us to have been so hard hit? The circumstances being changed, the cruelly learned lesson becomes inapplicable and therefore valueless. It seems to me man needs two lives, one to learn in, and the other to apply the teaching: as to the use our experience may be of to others, why that is worse still. We may endorse the French proverb, "*L'expérience est un habit qui ne se fait que sur mesure*," and so we must each purchase it for ourselves regardless of cost. We know that if each successive generation had the wisdom to profit by the mistakes of those that had preceded it we should end by knowing *too* much; and there has apparently always been an unaccountable but persevering opposition to this. We have only to go back to the moral teaching of early literature whether sacred or profane, to find how man's eager aspirations after superior knowledge have been always checked as soon as it had reached a certain point; the angel with the flaming sword, whom it has always been vain to resist, barring the way: something stronger than man's will, which he is *forced* to acknowledge, though, like the wind (which bloweth where it listeth and the effects whereof we feel), the wisest of us cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: the story of the tower of Babel, whether as narrated in the sacred page or unrolled in the imagery of the classic poet, teaches the same truth—"Thus far shalt thou go and no further."

If in the former we are told "The Lord scattered them

abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, so that they left off to build the city," in the latter we read words to the same effect :

"Tum Pater Omnipotens, misso, perfregit Olympum
Fulmine, et excussit, subjecto Pelio, Ossam."

Let us not then be surprised that neither races nor individuals are ever much the wiser for the mistakes of their predecessors ; it isn't so much that they *won't*, but that they *can't*, avoid the rock on which the ship sailing before them split : they don't possess the capacity for elevating their race at that rapid rate, and so probably to the end of the world, the dwarf will go on refusing to perch on the giant's shoulder. How small is the progress we have really made towards discovering any of the secrets of Nature ! and how often when we have flattered ourselves we had made a successful plunge, subsequent research has obliged us to admit it had been a miserable failure.

But the machine is driving on, and voices, especially angry ones—till now subdued—have to be raised, so that I am compelled to hear more of the matrimonial squabble which this united, but also dis-united, couple are carrying on, than, in the heat of their irritation they perhaps suspect and than I at all intend, for of course I am not listening—oh, dear me, no ; I wouldn't do such a mean thing for the world ; but I can't help *hearing* when people pitch their voices in the tone of a town-crier though it be to discuss their private affairs. In fact these disputants are so oblivious of all but their dispute, that they have ceased to allow for the alternations and fluctuations

of noise produced whether by the jolting of our own vehicle "rolling o'er the stony streets," or by the traffic that surrounds us ; so that words, and worse still, epithets, screeched out in a key intended to surmount the din of a Hansom rattling by, or a horse stumbling on the stones, do not become correspondingly modified as the obstructing sound suddenly subsides. The result recalls a very good story of the conductor—not of an omnibus, but of an oratorio, who, exasperated at finding among his audience people barbarous enough to maintain conversation during the performance, determined to pay them off in their own coin. He consequently gave secret instructions to his orchestra to come to a sudden and simultaneous standstill on reaching the climax of one of



the sublimest passages of "The Creation." The order was executed with consummate intelligence and also with consummate effect, for in that supreme moment when all who *were* listening were wrapped in thrilling awe at the overwhelming majesty of that grand pause

which succeeds the crash of cymbals and kettledrums—"And there was LIGHT"—the voice of one good old lady who had long been striving to top the instruments, was heard shouting to a deaf relative the interesting announcement, "We always fry ours in lard."

Even thus did this provoked husband and vixenish

wife forget their manners and raise *their* organs—(not barrel ones, but that, I am told, is the modern English for voices)—for the benefit of the company.

“Don’t deny it again, you know you *did*,” says the fair creature vituperatively—I suppose she once had been fair!

“I wouldn’t advise you to repeat that,” retorts the un-fair animal with a fiendish scowl intended to be dignified but proving only menacing: the wife, however, is hardened to such speeches and has become threat-proof.

“Then hold your tongue and don’t aggravate me to it,” she replies courageously.

“Better not say too much about ‘tongues’ and ‘aggravation,’” he answers with a vicious sneer, taking a mean advantage, but she is so callous it doesn’t strike home, for she contents herself with replying in a correspondingly taunting tone—

“I daresay now you think that’ll shut me up, but (looking round) if I say no more *here*, you just wait a bit and I’ll give you the rest at home”—the latter words in a lower key; for with a feminine tact which husbands can’t be expected to possess, she has begun to perceive the awkwardness of the situation, and to consider herself already sufficiently compromised, but she gives him a final look full of carving-knives and pokers. I note that too, and feel gladder than before that I am not any one’s husband:—*Dieu m’en garde*. As they desire to be set down, we hear no more of the marital setting down, but can very well see that it will not remain very long suspended. Their departure opens to my view a young

woman—no, she is apparently a shop-girl, and must therefore be addressed as “Miss,” and spoken of as a “young lady,”—wearing a round hat which has the appearance of having got on to her head by mistake, for I can’t see that in any way it suits her age or class or figure or face. It is adorned, or shall I not rather say disfigured?—but that is a question of taste—by a dead pigeon which lies helplessly on the brim, and must add very needlessly to the weight of this unbecoming head-gear; the taxidermist has employed so little skill in “setting up” the feathered carcase that one is almost forced to suppose it must have become accidentally unhooked as the wearer entered some poulterer’s shop, and dropped on her head as she passed. What *will* women wear next? I have been told that among fashions announced as purely Parisian has been a black or coloured velvet bonnet “*garni d’une couvée de perdrix!*” A whole covey at once; but onions, mushrooms, and asses’ ears—yes, asses’ ears imitated in plush—have already had their day among bonnet trimmings. *Punch* had a joke upon the covetous cook when she saw her mistress go out in a “’at trimmed with ’arf a fesant,” but this was a very tame affair compared to what the milliners are making their customers wear now. However, even the present style fails to rival the famous bonnet of Rowland Hill’s wife, to which that celebrated preacher amiably called the attention of his congregation as she entered the chapel—

“Here comes my wife with a chest of drawers on her head,” said he, interrupting his sermon: but this really was hyperbolical, you know, the fact being that the poor

woman, after vainly pleading for a few shillings to purchase a bonnet, was at last compelled to pawn a piece of furniture to obtain the required amount.

The self-conscious air with which the "young lady" carries about her dead pigeon—not in the least as if it had been a pet, like Lesbia's sparrow, in which case I could have excused her—is almost too much for my gravity and I cannot make up my mind as to what she may be, if not errand-girl to some shop, for she is untidy in the extreme, with a splashed dress, half-laced boots and



no gloves. I believe England is the only country which affords these equivocal specimens; it is impossible to conceive of such an object in any other, and yet in our metropolis, indeed in almost any large British town, such creatures swarm. In Paris, a girl of that class would wear a snow-white apron, and on her head a white cap, which would at least be consistent with the ungloved hands, and instead of a fantastic jacket made up of shoddy, cheap machine-braiding and gaudy beads, at a slop-shop, she would be wrapped in a black shawl, or a neat handkerchief crossed and pinned behind. How is it our lower classes are so utterly devoid of the simplest principles of good taste as to prefer cheap finery to plain and serviceable

attire comporting with their condition and occupation. You must excuse me, British public, you who invariably grumble *individually* at the practical failure of school-board education, which *collectively* you not only tolerate but countenance and tamely consent to pay for—you must excuse me, I say, if I fail to see any, much less any adequate-to-its-cost, improvement in the moral tone and in the visible habits of the classes it professes to benefit. So far from this, we might well—too well—apply to this singularly fallacious system that most concise and suggestive observation of Pope’s “A little learning is a dangerous thing,” for if we needed a proof of it we might find it in the present attitude and condition of our lower classes, and in the effect produced on the population generally by the ridiculous over-estimate they have been led to form of their own attainments and personality. It is well known that there is no influence over the human mind stronger than the conviction of its own ignorance, as acquired from *much* learning:—the more we learn the less we seem to know, so immeasurable is the vista opened out to us in every department of knowledge when once we have fairly entered on its several roads; while a little superficial smattering can have and does have but one result, viz: to make us “wise in our own conceit”—a condition Solomon declares to be more hopeless than that of a fool.

It is obvious that the very costly machinery set in motion of late years under the delusive plea that it is to “educate” (!) the lower classes can only result in giving them the falsest possible ideas not only of everything

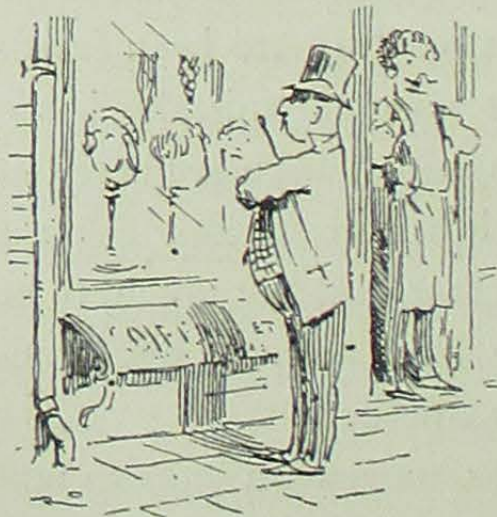
they are nominally set to learn, but also of themselves and of others, for while concentrating its efforts on mere cramming, it supplies no moral training and enforces no sense of social duties and obligations. Let any one, ever so prejudiced in favour of the modern idea of popular *education*—leaving *instruction* out of the question for the moment—read over calmly and honestly the Christian catechumen's "Duty towards God" and "Duty towards his Neighbour" in the simple, comprehensible, and comprehensive words of the Church-Catechism and ask himself whether there could possibly be any rule of life more admirably imagined or more excellently expressed: then let him further ask himself whether the new device of public education can be said to be in any way based upon those most commendable principles, and if not, by what others they have been replaced. Our relations with the modern British workman and the modern British domestic are the most convincing answer to those who would learn the results of modern public education as it has hitherto been (mis)-conducted: but that lamentable national mistake is too serious a matter to admit of its being discussed here; if therefore I dismiss the subject, it is not because there is nothing, but because there is a great deal too much, to be said upon the mischief it is working and the disastrous consequences it has, thus far, produced.

A stylishly dressed woman has moved up so as to face me, and while mentally doubting whether the component items of her toilet are not juvenile enough to justify the old proverb that it is in vain to dress an old ewe lamb-

fashion (though by the by *mint-sauce* is a mighty auxiliary in such a case), my eye falls on and at the same time admires—for its ingenuity—the bright chestnut "front" she wears. It is a choice piece of workmanship, so naturally executed that I half doubt whether I should have recognised it as *postiche* but for an unlucky jolt which has revealed the fact, and along with it a very ugly place, *chauve comme un genou* as the French say, which lurks beneath it: that is, I admit, one objection to the carriage and pair of the people; it is not hung on Cee springs.

I perceive the victim of this rough driving has just become conscious of the *exposé*, and while she is trying to readjust matters I generously look another way; I begin to think of my own capillary deficiencies, and to calculate how long it is likely to be before I shall want such an ornament myself. I will (confidentially) confess

I have some time since reached the preliminary stage which obliges us to comb the



few scattered locks we can collect in the vicinity, adroitly over the spot which lacks them altogether, and it is perhaps becoming urgent to discover if corresponding "fronts" or rather "backs" are manufactured for men, and if so how they are ex-

pected to keep them in their places. There is some excuse for wigs and toupees, they are useful as well as

ornamental, and on this account are more permissible than dyes, which I think betray a weak mind, and are always detectable, not only from the dead expression they cast over the locks they stain but because they spread one uniform hue over the whole mass, and this is not Nature's wont.

These contemplations of the infirmities of others naturally strike home, for I am not quite a fool and can not only perceive but admit that I am growing old, though I am constantly *told* how young I look. Now, do you know, I have met people who are stupid enough to be pleased and flattered and all that, when any one pays them, what I consider, the very bad compliment of telling them this: for myself, I hate it as I hate all that savours of bad taste, and what can be worse taste than to tell a man that he "*looks* young;" why, what does such a remark mean if it mean anything at all? It can only be that the speaker takes him to be a great deal older than he says he looks, and therefore it is absolutely equivalent to telling him that he looks very old—a description of communication long since eliminated from polite as well as politic conversation.

However, there must be many who rejoice in that consoling French proverb which declares that a man really is no older than he looks, and as for French *women*, why they think or try to think that they never grow old at all. "*On a beau dire, la femme a toujours vingt ans dans quelque coin de son cœur,*" writes one of their authors; "*Il y a des femmes qui restent toujours jeunes par le cœur,*" scribbles another; and from the memoirs of the time we are enabled to cite at least one living instance

of a Frenchwoman who, whether physically or morally, never grew old at all; for she not only drove one of her lovers to the desperation which ends in suicide, by revealing to him that she was his grandmother, but gave another (a certain duke) a *rendezvous* authorising him to pay her his addresses on her eightieth birthday, whence the well-known phrase "*Le bon billet qu'a la Châtre.*"

Diane de Poitiers, though before her in chronology, was but little behind Ninon de l'Enclos in the preservation of her youthfulness; indeed she remained so juvenile during two generations that after being the *adorée* of one monarch, she was considered by the son of that monarch young enough and charming enough to retain her situation at court during the succeeding reign. She, however, pursued an original *régime*, rising very early in the morning and after two hours in the saddle, followed by a bath, resorting again to her bed for breakfast, and also for some hours' rest after it, which she employed in reading. It would be interesting to know what it was she read so assiduously in those days of limited light literature.

Be all this as it may, I don't disguise from you any more than from myself, my dear reader, that I am close upon that certain or, as Byron more correctly calls it, "uncertain" age which I contend is the one we ought to style *l'âge ingrat*, instead of applying that term to the chrysalis state of hobbledehoydon which, at least, has a coming time; for, do what we will, *ours* never seems to respond to our efforts to meet it and retard its advances. It may be termed the age at which Nature ungratefully refuses to let us do anything more for her; that is, without being

found out. You may dye, and you may pencil, and you may paint, and rouge, and powder, *up* to a certain moment (which unfortunately is the time when you not only don't need these artificial touchings up, but would look far better without them), but alas! when the moment arrives at which you do need this extraneous supplementation, it has become not merely difficult but impossible to apply it without making bad worse, and calling attention to failings and deficiencies which it only betrays instead of masking.



There is no harmony between what we are and what we do to improve (?) ourselves, and however carefully we go to work the "*bout de l'oreille*" is sure to pierce through somewhere, and make us absurd as well as ghastly. Nature's lines and tints are her own, and she has never delivered to any artist—not even to the ingenious (and, in a certain class, much employed) "artists in black eye"—the secret of imitating them successfully on the human subject.

The conclusion, therefore, I have arrived at is that—even in the interest of good looks—to say nothing in deprecation of the moral weakness of resisting the inevitable inroads of time and wear; it is far better to leave Nature alone and to grow old resignedly. As there is a beauty in childhood, a beauty in youth, and a beauty in maturity, so is there a beauty in old age; but each period,

to charm us, must be left intact and in the enjoyment of its own special characteristics ; for the moment these phases encroach on or interfere with each other, a false position is created, and the beauty peculiar to it evaporates as if by enchantment. Golden hair is beautiful on the head of a young maiden whose complexion and features correspond with it ; the nearest approach to this divine hue that art seems able to make, is canary-colour ; that accessory, therefore (whether obtained by yellow dye or borrowed plumage), framing a face drawn and wrinkled by time, not only fails to be beautiful, but magnifies the defects it is intended to palliate, while the clumsy attempt only makes the wearer contemptible. But where's the use of preaching against these weak-minded efforts to rejuvenate the aspect of the worn-out machine ? who can hope to extinguish in his fellow-men the ruling passion strong in death ? " My hair will be white as long as I live," said an old man to a friend of his own age, " and yours will be black as long as you dye." Painting and patching once indulged in, are rarely abandoned, even at the last ; it is a human weakness of ancient date—

" And, Betty, give this other cheek a little red,
One wouldn't, sure, be ugly when one's dead."

But even Death isn't always allowed to have it quite all his own way.

Some years ago, when in Vienna, I became acquainted for the first time with a custom prevalent there which must, I think, like so many that we ourselves tamely follow, have been started and kept up by a syndicate of undertakers,

who, no doubt, originally forced it on their employers; it is so easy to cite "Prince this" or "Count that" or "Grand-Duchess so-and-so" as having practised the thing, by way of setting it in vogue; and the public, always ready to ape the classes above or even upon its own level, adopts the suggestion without venturing to oppose or even to question it.

It related to the treatment of the dead after the doctor's work was accomplished and that of the *croque-mort* began, and consisted not only in foisting upon the bereaved and helpless survivors an elaborately shaped coffin of the most gorgeous make, lined with quilted satin, covered with the richest coloured silk velvets, and correspondingly decorated with costly gold or silver ornaments, but also in laying out the corpse to represent a sleeping beauty in a fairy palace. The chamber of death, shorn of its tender and touching solemnity, was converted into a floral hall, where the choicest exotics mingled with wax lights, gave it the aspect of a bridal bower; the corpse, in all the ashy ghastliness of recent death, was made yet ghastlier by futile attempts to cheat the King of Terrors of the prey he already called his own. The face and hands (and, if of the fair sex, the throat, shoulders, and arms) were made up by artists skilled in this lugubrious work, with the help, if necessary, of wax, and painted in the softest and most blooming colours, such as the wearers had never possessed even in life: a rich white-lace embroidered veil thrown over these patched-up relics of humanity as they lay on their white satin couch helped to tone down the crudity of this barbarous incongruity; and the undertaker,

callous to the horrors of such an outrage on good taste, and apparently unconscious of his presumptuous violation of the sacredness of death, looked on exultingly as the relations, neighbours, and friends came in and viewed the whited sepulchre, ignoring the festering charnel-house within. How the taste of any nation could have become so perverted as to submit to this degrading imposition, nor perceive its mockery of the most solemn phase under which Nature can appeal to us, passes my understanding.

Is there in the whole world anything that so irresistibly touches us as the sublime pathos of Death? In its presence the most hardened are melted, and the strong man's very soul is stirred so that he weeps like a little child. Thackeray well said that "a man is never more manly than when he is what is called unmanned," and every woman will endorse the sentiment; but what becomes of these emotions, so ennobling to our nature and sometimes so salutary to our moral being, in the presence of a dead lay-figure daubed and dressed up like a theatrical dummy? If this unseemly process be supposed to take away the normal terror of death by the sorry expedient of masking its reality, it imparts to it instead a new horror, from which one would expect all rightly trained minds instinctively to shrink. Rather than that the commercial spirit which has thus dared attempt to make capital of our holiest sentiments should invade the chamber of death in our own country, let us hope for the universal adoption of the law of cremation to baffle the machinations of this sacrilegious trade.

The royal undertaker in Vienna, after showing me

over his gorgeous and ingenious "properties," informed me with the pride of an *artiste* that "when the Princess Marguerite was burnt to death and so disfigured as to be absolutely unrecognisable, he had with labour, patience, and the skilful employment of modelling tools, wax, paint, false hair, and the help of the latest photo taken of H.S.H., 'restored' her face, bust, arms, and hands with such perfection that to those who approached the flower-besprinkled bed, covered with lace and surrounded with wax-lights and perfumes, the young and beautiful Princess appeared to be sweetly reposing on the silken softness of her bridal couch."

In other words, no one would have believed that all they saw in that solemn hour was a hollow sham concealing the pitiably charred victim of a disastrous accident.

As regards my bewigged fellow-traveller, whose artificial thatch has carried us to the Austrian capital and back, I am willing to allow that if unkind Nature had given her that of which it has been said that though "nobody wants it, yet when one has got it he wouldn't part with it for the world," viz., a bald head, she might be excused for covering it with somebody else's hair; but in case these pages should fall into her hands, I strongly advise her to consult some clever mechanician as to the best mode of retaining it on the spot where it should seem to grow. By the time I have finished all the reflections to which the faultiness of its fit has given rise, the lady has taken herself off, and a very handsomely dressed and be-bustled woman bustles in, followed by her daughter or perhaps niece—nay, I feel sure she is the

niece by several indications. In the first place the aunt (if aunt she be) is red-faced and not over-refined, while the niece (if niece) is of a pale, delicate complexion, and has what novelists term "chiselled features;" the tints are soft and harmonious, and the face possesses, now I come to look at it, many elements of beauty, *i.e.*, as far as these are supplied by form and colour; and yet, to my surprise, it does not suggest any attractiveness. I question my own fastidiousness and ask what more could one's eye reasonably expect.

I then remember a curious circumstance connected with this class of face; its beauties did not strike me at first sight, neither did I discover them till I came to look for them; so this is the explanation: absence of thought, of mind, of culture—

"We start—for soul is wanting there."

The skin is fair, clear, and even beautifully tinted, the hair golden, the eyes blue, the form of the face oval, the features delicate, but they betray no indication of intelligence, no sign of cultivation; no depth in the eyes, no refinement of feeling in the other features; no character in the chin, while the ears are large and prominent. The girl might be a parlour-maid, and although I can't say she is absolutely "vulgar," yet I couldn't fancy seeing her in a house of the upper class anywhere but at the door. She is well dressed, and so is her "aunt," but for all that there is no grace in her attire, no *cachet* even about her sealskin coat! Her dress, a harmonious "arrangement in green and blue," somewhat *osé* therefore, must have been chosen

for her, though probably not her gloves with their countless buttons! I try to sum them up, but fail every time; before I have passed six I have lost my reckoning, and for aught I know there may be a dozen—"a baker's dozen"—on each arm. What a business it must be to get into these gloves! Poor Arthur Sketchley used to say "it was a cause for thankfulness that we were not centipedes, for it would be such dreadful work if we had to button on fifty pairs of boots every time we were about to take a walk," yet we have gone out of our way to invent gloves with a score of buttons, after all our lives having found two, or three at the most, sufficient for all purposes.

What follies people will commit in obedience to the autocratic tradesman, whose interest alone we are able to trace in their adoption.



A jolly fellow sits near me perusing the columns of a daily paper: at length he observes to his wife—

"My dear, there's been another dreadful railway accident."

"You don't say so!" answers the wife. "Any lives lost?"

"Lives lost! I should think so; sixteen dead and thirty wounded."

"How dreadful, to be sure! Wherever did it happen?"

"Somewhere near Bordeaux."

"Bordeaux! why, that's in France, ain't it?"

"Of course."

"Oh law! why didn't you say so at first. *That's* all! and you to make such a fuss about it!"

Do not we all thus, without knowing it, recognise the fact, "*major, e longinquo, reverentia*"?

As soon as the detail of locality was communicated, the woman expressed no more concern than if sixteen flies had been found drowned in the milk-pot and thirty-two more left struggling on an "all-alive-o" paper.

To be honest, my own interest in the accident subsided considerably when I heard how far off it was and that the victims were not my own countrymen; and yet—and yet—said I to myself, how unreflecting is such indifference! A human life is of much the same value in all civilised countries, and after all, every one of these sufferers has probably a circle of mourners around him; be sure that even the convict who has just been hanged was *somebody's* darling, strange as it may seem to the outside world, which sees in him only a dastardly and hateful criminal.

Broken legs and arms, and fractured skulls, are just as

frightful to behold or to think of a thousand as they are a hundred miles off, and a mangled Frenchman is as much an object of sympathising pity as a demolished Englishman, though it has been ingeniously remarked that, of the one we say "*il est mort*," while of the other, "he is *no* more."

Nevertheless two casualties occurring, one in a near, the other in a remote, locality, present themselves to our imagination under two entirely different aspects; so selfish are we, albeit unconsciously, that the proximity of a disaster mainly touches us by the implied possibility that it may in some way or other affect ourselves personally; whereas if at a distance from us, whether as regards time or place, we can shut it from our sight by interposing interests more immediate.

We may hear of the death of one we love with comparative composure, while to see him on his deathbed is an actuality adding to our grief a thousand tender details which become ineffaceable memories in our hearts as long as our own lives shall endure:

"Segnius irritant animos dimissa per aures
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus"——

I once saw a photograph of a wretched dog under vivisection: I won't describe the sickening effect of that spectacle; I will only say that if the oppositionists of that (I venture to think) inexcusable scientific amusement were to disseminate these harrowing representations broadcast over the land, they would do more thereby to support their objections than by all the speeches that ever were made, reported, and published.

And now we are on that much-vexed subject, I am going to utter a sentiment at which I know beforehand all narrow-minded and illogical people will consider they ought to raise their spread palms and turn up the whites of their eyes. I am going to ask—

(1.) Supposing that there be any validity in the excuse that vivisection *must be* practised in the interests of human nature, would not the experiment be much more valuable if made on a human subject?

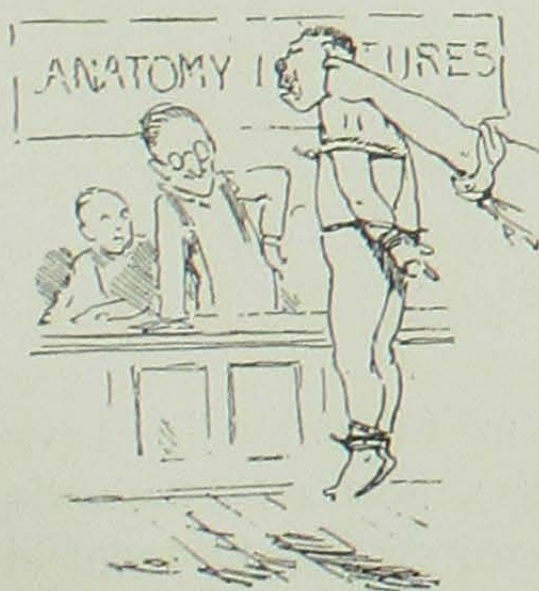
(2.) If so, would it not be logical to take for the purpose those coarse, selfish, sensual, disgusting brutes—(no, not brutes, brutes don't get drunk and then become savage murderers)—demons, who, trusting to an ill-judged impunity, kick their wives to death, flay their children alive, and perpetrate horrors which it is only for silly pseudo-humanitarians to palliate: why not, I say, if in the interest of science and "*humanity*" vivisection *must be*, why not diminish crime by examples of vivisectionary punishment on men who have no feeling for others, instead of resorting to the cowardly expedient of torturing a defenceless and innocent animal, betraying his confidence, and ungratefully ignoring the affection which would lead him to save his master's life at the expense of his own, and if his efforts failed, to die on that master's grave.

Why do we determine to sink the important fact that all convicts are volunteers? Do you think if your Palmers, Tropmanns, Pranzinis, &c. &c., knew *for certain* they would be vivisected, we should have a fiftieth part of the crimes we are daily horrified with now? And yet, as if crime were not sufficiently encouraged by our present

system of leniency, we hear, now, of the proposed abolition of the halter, and the substitution of some *gentler* form of capital punishment!—some anæsthetic contrivance which shall secure to these heartless ruffians a blissful euthanasia! Why not consult them themselves—poor dears!—suggesting the warm-bath and lancet process of classic memory as an alternative to the ignominy of the gallows.

An article in a recent number of one of our first-class periodicals, after dwelling on the barbarity of a policeman who, having found a woman lying in the gutter badly hurt *and a good deal the worse for liquor*, took her off to the station without sending for a doctor, quotes Mr. Montagu Williams to the effect that “*Because men or women are drunk that is no reason for treating them like brutes!*”

May we not ask—what have gentle, innocent, serviceable “brutes” done that *they* should be treated like those repulsive objects, or rather as they *ought* to be treated if they got their deserts?





London street-traffic—The haste of foot-passengers—The errand-boys—The apothecary's boy—Faith the best medicine—Telegraph boys—Telegrams—Varieties of import among these—The baker's young man often also Soosan's "young man"—More hurry worse speed—The "crawler" nuisance—Haste v. Hurry—A hastened marriage—Prestige—Even in matters of the table—Anecdote—Foot-passengers—Their self-centred aspect—What becomes of their momentary self-importance—Is it true that "Nothing signifies"?—St. Philip Neri—"After that?"—The little churchyard at Rothay—Wordsworth's grave there—A significant illustration—"Strangers yet"—Carlyle's "Past and Present"—Back to the vacated omnibus—Diminished standard of British stature—The ceaseless flow of traffic—Walking on two legs—Why not on four?—Ovid's view of the origin of the present custom—Evolution—Development from a philosophical starting-point—The "yellow primrose"—"What is life?"—Often asked, never answered—Vitality—Schopenhauer—Alfred de Vigny—Carlyle—The Talmud—De Quincey—Lord Lytton—Young—Corneille—Delavigne—Voltaire—Sterling—Davenant—Crabbe Robinson's remark—Wordsworth's definition—Pope's description—Espronceda's view—Persius—Boileau—The first and second half of life—Nonbelle—Byron's conclusion—Life hereafter—An Oriental theory—The Upanishads—Bubbles—Vegetarians—Pisciaris—My journey's end.

ONE by one all my fellow-travellers have dropped away, and I find myself sole occupant of the carriage. Once more as in life, so here; my turn to depart will come in due time, for "what are we but servants at will." Mean-

while lacking any object of interest within, I turn to the street for entertainment, and my eye naturally falls on the pedestrians—not a very novel nor yet a very unusual sight to most people, though, strange as it may seem, it is to some. I realised this a few weeks ago, walking with a friend just arrived from the wilds of southern S. America, where he has passed the greater part of his life, and could not but be struck when he expressed the most childlike joy at the delight of strolling through the town, of feeling himself again among civilised fellow-creatures, and of being once more in presence of, for it could hardly be said even to be in sympathy with, human interests.

I have thought over that state of mind a good deal since, though of course it is difficult to picture accurately to oneself what the effect of returning from such an exile must be; but I think I have, from that time, contemplated the denizens of our streets with a different eye—in a less abstract sense, and their personalities seem to suggest to me ideas I never had about them before.

As I look on them to-day, accordingly, I start from a new departure, and find myself studying their general demeanour no less than their distinctive peculiarities. My first exclamation is—How these fellows hurry along the pavement! Each one with his own preoccupied, purposeful mien, as if his whole soul were in the object, whatever it may be, that his mind is set on. By the by, how comes it that everybody *has* such important business on hand, and is so absorbed in it? There are no idlers here; the only loungers are those who have undertaken for hire to do other people's business, and the hireling

dawdleth because he *is* an hireling. What is his master's business to him? he neither knows its importance nor yet cares he if it be neglected. The boy who carries that fine middle-cut of salmon on which the *gourmet* (who took such pains to personally select it) is now feasting in anticipation, has set down his tray on the hot pavement, and the silvery scales glisten in the noonday sun, which is giving such picturesque and Schneider-like effect to the crimson section, half-veiled by delicate feathery sprays of bright-green fennel: the stupid uncultivated eye of the profane vulgar notes it not, so accustomed is it to see the contents of those green wooden trays basking in the sun; while the conventional errand-boy, like the one we are watching to-day, plays his game at pitch and toss with the pastry-cook's emissary, whose pies are becoming greasier and more greasy under the July temperature.

"Alas! regardless of their crime,
The little demons play"—



their vagaries exciting a sympathetic interest in the heart of that pale druggist's lad — perhaps a future Baroneted M.D. who will one day clatter along in his carriage and pair, scaring other errand

boys and prudently oblivious of his own shabby antece-

dents : just now he carries a basket of pill-boxes, phials, and packets of diluted poisons which are awaited with as much anxiety as if they really were capable of doing all the good the prescribing physician has made the patient believe ! That belief may perhaps help the sick man, though the physic won't. A great Physician told His patient honestly, "Thy faith hath saved thee"—there was no medical humbug there ; just so the *naïf* patient who had been stethoscoped declared, "he *did* feel better after *that* ;" and it would seem there is nothing in the way of medicine people won't believe in : take, for example, the American lady whose favourite hymn was, "I would not live alway," and yet "it is a well-known fact"—in the States—that during ten years she spent 2300 dollars in patent medicines !

I am not going to say anything against the dawdling proclivities of that boy with the drugs, because I have no doubt (although he doesn't slacken his pace with any such philanthropic intent) that his delay is an act—nay several acts—of mercy. I should even like to see that boy abscond with the "Blister to be applied immediately," the "Mixture to be taken every two minutes,"

". the blue, blue pill,
And the black, black draught in the morning."

Unfortunately, however hopelessly the urchin may object to "keep his hands from picking and stealing," he may be quite safely trusted with *that* cargo.

Shall we say the same or the reverse of the delay of those two young imps of telegraph boys who have just met and seem to have so *much* to say to each other as they stand there gossiping while each holds in his hand

the message that may mean life or death! What are to *him* the hieroglyphics he carries in that ominous salmon-coloured envelope, and so—

“Gay, thoughtless wretch! he whistles as he goes!”

Now he is chivying his companion along the pavement, two steps back and one step forward, like the pilgrims in the annual “holy dance” at Echternach; at last, one of them has accomplished the novel and original feat of knocking off the other’s cap, and the owner must of course go back to pick it up; the minutes are flying—minutes every second of which is being perhaps frantically counted by some expectant watcher, till five of them seem magnified into fifty! Who can tell what nameless misery it is the purport of that message to relieve, or perhaps, alas, to confirm! or again, what may be the fatal consequences of protracting its arrival, and yet it is only a slip of paper enclosed in a salmon-coloured envelope, hundreds of which nowadays are



reduced to the conveying of the most commonplace communications:—“Have dinner ready by six, I have a box for the play”—or “Meet me at the Cri at seven,” and (when to the wife of his bosom) “I shan’t be home till late: N.B. Don’t

sit up.” Bachelors all know what that means; so do a great many wives, and the rest suspect it.

My sympathies, just now, are all with the luckless *destinataires* of the delayed information those good-for-nothing lads are so thoughtlessly detaining, and I do my best to persuade myself that they are not of more serious import than those I have cited.

The calm deliberation of that baker's young man seated on his basket piled up with the nice crusty cottage-loaves, making rather a handy seat, but destined to be afterwards eaten by his master's customers (I'm glad I'm not one of them), riles me as much as anything I have yet seen; time passes quickly enough for him as he gossips and flirts and laughs with black-eyed Soosan at the "haëry gate;" but plenty of loiterers of this class we may see all day long, creeping like snail unwillingly to whatever may be the task they have been paid to accomplish; grocers' men and butchers' boys, answerable for a good deal of swearing on the part of a justly-irritated cook, errand-boys, and messengers, *et id genus omne*; yes, these are in no hurry, . . . but the others—the general public? Does it ever occur to any one to ask himself (or anybody else), why the world is always in such a desperate hurry? why, when we have any object in view we are always so eager to arrive at it? Some philosopher justly remarked on this inconsistency of human nature—that we are all, most illogically, anxious to shorten each period of our lives, and at the same time to prolong the whole which is composed of those periods! Very often the hurry we are in occasions a result the very reverse of what we intended: thus some people are in such a hurry to get over a crossing

that they forget to take into account the generous indulgence the law allows to the legions of "crawlers" that infest the streets—a veritable "plague of flies"—cleverly dodging the foot-passenger, so that he has no sooner edged his way, at imminent risk, past one, than he finds himself bewildered in the middle of the road with two more crossing each other, and if he survive this attack, there is a fourth obstructing his attempt to reach the opposite kerb: well, this being so, crossing is a work of time,

and if he be in such haste that he cannot allow for it, he gets knocked down, is carried to the hospital, and supposing he ever recovers at all, he finds he has been much longer reaching home than if he had waited ten or even twelve seconds for the road to be sufficiently cleared. But for those guardian-angels in cerulean livery who watch over the lives of H.M.'s liege pedestrians, the "crawlers" would leave them no chance at all.



It is not long since a noble Earl leaving his door was in such a hurry to be off that he couldn't wait for the cab one of his servants was gone to fetch, but must needs scamper off himself to call another, and ran so fast that (his heart being probably weak to begin with) he *never*

got to the place he was so eager to reach, for he fell down in the street and was carried back dead; in fact, he overreached himself altogether, for he had no idea, when he started, of going so far as that.

It is very right and proper to use a due amount of diligence and activity on all occasions, but there is neither grace nor dignity, nor yet wisdom, nor prudence, in hurry. *Festina lente* was Swift's motto, and though it may sound paradoxical it is well worth consideration and adoption, as being probably the swiftest way after all: there are many undertakings (besides matrimony) which we may plunge into in haste and repent of at leisure.

I can tell you a funny story, however, which has for its basis matrimonial hurry, but I feel like the fellow who, telling an eye-opening tale, said to his listener—"I don't suppose you'll believe it; I shouldn't myself if I hadn't seen it."—"Ah, but," answered the other, "I *didn't* see it, you know."

Well, I didn't see this; but, like the ghost stories of which one somehow never does see the principals, I was told of it by a friend who had a friend who heard it from a brother of the undertaker; for there is an undertaker in the story, and, as you will see, he played no unimportant part in it.

You must know then that there was a Flourishing publican, by name Hitchens, not that there was any hitch in his business, and if there had been, he would probably have known how to come to the scratch, for he contrived to heap up a large Fortune: now it came to pass that the publican (he may have been a sinner too for aught I

know), that the publican died, leaving a buxom widow, Fat, Fair, Forty, and Fortuned: there were more F's than this in it (some people might consider there was a good deal of ef-fronterry): the undertaker was one Frederick Frisby—Frisby and Father—and they lived at Finchley.

Now the widow was left so well off that she determined to "do things 'ansome," so she ordered a First-class Funeral with Feathers, Four horses to the hearse, and Four mourning-coaches with Four horses each. As this Finery "ran into money," Frisby and Father thought they ought to make sure the widow could meet the cost, so "our Mr. Frisby" went to the lawyers, F—— & F—— of Fibbing's Inn Fields—a regular pair of Foxes I may remark by the way—and he put the plain question as to Funds.



"Pay!" says old F——, "Why, man, as a Fact that widow could buy you up Fifty times over any day."

"Frankly?" says Frisby, "you don't say so!" though of course he knew old F—— *had* that minute asserted it; but that was Frisby's

Facetious little way. Old F——, who had other Fish to Fry, stood before the Fire Fidgetting his Fingers as if he were washing his Fins in Fancy water, while Frisby

stood lost in thought, quite unaware that he was scratching his head as Foolish Folks will when they Find something difficult to Fork out. "Do you know, Mr. F——," he said at last, "I've a great mind to go in for that Female."

"Why not?" answered F——, encouragingly; "do it cleverly, and no doubt you'll not Fail."

"That's very Friendly of you, Mr. F——; but what . . . might you exactly mean by 'cleverly'?"

"Well," answered F—— with that well-known crafty wink of his, "I wouldn't leave it too long."

"Too long! Eh? . . . Why then, when do you think I might venture to . . . to pop the question?"

"I should say the sooner the better; there's other Fortune-hunters might have the same Fancy as you, you know."

"Well then," says Frisby, "I'll do it at once."

"'At once!' Why that's rather sharp practice; the Fellow isn't buried yet, is he? I should say, wait till after the Funeral and Feel your ground; you might be considered too Forward and get Flouted: but mind when you've got her, I shall expect to be asked to the wedding."

Frisby went his way Feeling Frisky over the good advice, and wondering what "Fee" F—— & F—— would expect over and above the invitation to the marriage-Feast.

Next day, he was at the house of the deceased, and having gone up to the chamber of death, sent down a respectful message to Mrs. Hitchins as to whether she wouldn't like to take one Fond look at the dear departed

before he screwed him down (report said that it wasn't the first time the old man had been screwed); but let that pass, he was now tight in his coffin.

Mrs. Hitchins returned word that she would Follow, and there she Found Frisby Fumbling beside the tressels, the coffin-lid in one hand, the sympathetic black-bordered pocket-handkerchief in the other, and False tears in his eyes (he had just Filched them from the water-jug).



The Frail widow approached, looked in and gave a deep, deep sigh; Frisby echoed it, and slowly wagged his head to and Fro as he looked First at the corpse and then at the relict.

"Mrs. 'Itchins," he said Falteringly, "you're a-bearin' of it beautiful! To think

that such a Fascinatin' one as you should be left a Forlorn woman! but it won't be for long, Mrs. 'Itchins; it *can't* be for long. Mrs. 'Itchins, it *may* seem Full soon to tell you 'ow I admires your Fortitood, and what I'd give to see you one day a-weepin' beside my coffin . . . O no, I Forgot, I shan't see that, but others might, and it's a sight I should be *proud* of, it is." . . . Then leaning the lid for convenience against the coffin, for it began to be rather

in the way, Frisby Flopped on one knee, and added, "Fairest creature! *will* you marry me?"

"Mr. Frisby, Mr. Frisby," answered the Frail Fair one with a roseate Flush, "you're quite a pote, and it's a pleasure to 'ear you talk like that . . . why ever didn't you say all this before! . . . but it can't be 'elped now: you're too late! the Reverend Mr. Flatterby came to read conslayshuns to me yesterday, and he arst me First, and I . . . I've haccepted 'im!"

Frisby, now Furious, went back to old F. and F. "'Ere's a Fine mess you've got me into with your Foolish advice," said he. "'Wait till the Funeral's over,' says you: I noo I should be too late, though I didn't wait even for that, and I *was*. The parson he done it the day before, and I'm reg'lar Floored!"

But I am watching the ceaseless come and go, go and come, of those pedestrians crossing each other in the street. I have no doubt if we had the patience to count them, we should find the numbers of the comers correspond pretty evenly with those of the goers; but how happens it that the dwellers in the easterly direction find such imperative calls to be always rushing westwards, while, on the other hand, the westerners are ever speeding eastwards with corresponding eagerness, just as if a malicious Fate had amused herself by setting everybody down in the wrong place? Is it due to that strange "perversity of circumstances" which forms such an irritatingly obstacular element in our daily experience, or is it not also partly owing to that stranger perversity of our nature which is so apt to make us despise whatever is

easy of attainment, and to set store by all that is out of our reach, when in fact there can be no real, but at best only a fancy, difference? People will often give themselves and others an infinity of trouble to procure from distant countries commodities which, if ever they come to inhabit those localities and to have them familiarly at hand, cease to be in any degree prized by them; and I believe many of us think twice as much of a physician or a dentist if he lives a long way off, and if it gives us a great deal of trouble to get to his house and a great deal more to get to see him when we *are* there. We have a way of believing that if an article of consumption costs money and labour to obtain, it must "do us good" in some mysterious way; thus venison and salmon are regarded by Londoners as food for the gods, whilst in the wilds of Scotland, where during certain seasons people get a little too much of them, it was once, and still is perhaps, the custom for servants to stipulate that these dainties, which the cockney looks at from a distance with longing eyes, should be served on the kitchen table only so many times a month.

A story on this subject which I have heard seems so *à propos* that I risk the possibility of your having also heard it before. If you have, you know, you needn't read it.

One of the Red-shield family dining one day at Lord Beaconsfield's, his hostess remarked as the venison was served round, how strange it was that any one should be found who didn't think mutton much better.

"Ma tear lady," answered the Baron—whose pronunciation was slightly . . . well, slightly characteristic

—"foolish peoplesh will always prefer that which is tear to that which is sheap." And he was right,—punning apart,—the profane vulgar will always split on that rock called *prestige*, of which our Lord so sagely bid us beware when he averred that a prophet hath no honour in his own country; but we know very well the same prophet will be thought a good deal of in any other, especially if he do not make himself cheap by remaining too long in it.

As we watch these busy men and women who fill the streets, we cannot help judging from their expression that each considers the particular errand on which he or she is bent, paramount to every other—the pivot on which everything that signifies revolves, just as one's own dwelling always seems, no matter where situated, to be the centre of the town.

What haste! what determination! what preoccupation! what disregard of the whole world besides! and yet if any one of these businesses, larger or smaller, were to collapse, would it make one iota of difference to the world at large? In many cases would it make any difference to the parties themselves, and if it did, mightn't it just as well happen to be the other way up? Might it not often prove to have been much better if they had left alone all the scheming and cutting and contriving to compass that particular object? Either way it can be but a question of time: most of us will be prepared to admit that there are few incidents in their past, which—however important they may have seemed at the time—have not, after a certain interval, lapsed into such utter indifference that we have come to wonder, not only why we were so eager

about them, but how we could ever have cared for them at all. This thought, however, suggests an analogy which we cannot contemplate without uneasiness: we see a child as inconsolable over a broken toy as we ourselves over a lost friend: the child survives his misfortune however, and in the next phase of his life would throw that toy into the fire if he found it: shall *we* ever arrive at a phase of existence so different from our present one, that if a lost and lamented friend were given us again, we should discover we no longer valued that friendship, once so priceless? Our *heart* replies, "The thing is impossible;" our *reason* answers, "If when we become a man we put away childish things, why should we not in like manner, when we become a spirit, put away human things?"



Alas! if this be so, it will be a matter of indifference to us whether we recover or miss, in a future state, those friendships which were all in all to us here, and seemed to have been welded into our very being inseparably and for ever!

When I was a good little boy and conscientiously read the "Lives of the Saints" on a Sunday afternoon, there was one in particular that I remember still: I am pretty sure it was the life of S. Philip Neri: to

the best of my recollection he was travelling one day through a forest when he was overtaken by a venerable old monk who, after saluting him, walked on by his side. I suppose they opened their conversation as usual with the state of the weather, and after that preliminary, the old fellow asked the lad what sort of a future he had in his mind's eye.

"Oh! I want to be a soldier," said the youth.

"A soldier! Is *that* all?"

"Ah, yes, but I don't mean to remain in the ranks, I hope I shall soon be promoted and become a captain."

"A captain! and after that?"

"Well, you see, I shall be a colonel next."

"Ay, and after that?"

"Why shouldn't I become a general?"

"You have a noble ambition, my young friend, but surely you won't be content to stop *there*?"

"Well, perhaps not; you know it has been often known that generals have ultimately become emperors. . . . I *might* become an emperor," said the youth hesitatingly.

"Ah! to be sure; and after that?"

"Why," . . . answered the lad with a sigh; "after that . . . I suppose I must die!"

"And after *that*?" said the monk, as he looked on the bright lad with an expression of mingled seriousness and compassion, for he hung his head and seemed quite unprepared with an answer. They had reached a spot where two cross-roads met; the monk went his way, but the youth sat down on a stone to think, and the result of his thoughts was that all was vanity: he gave up the army and turned to religion: still his ambitious spirit survived,

though it was directed into a different channel, and he ended by founding a "congregation" which flourishes to this day, but even this won't go on for ever, and "*After that?*"

Erasmus said in his colloquies that "despair throws a man into the army or the monastery."

I remember an occasion on which the sense of this reduction to nothingness, of considerations which at one time seem so vitally important, came forcibly home to me. One autumn evening while the sun was calmly setting in a crimson glow—

"And not a breath crept through the rosy air"—

I found myself wandering in the rustic little churchyard of Rothay among the graves and the associations of the Lake-poets. I stood beside the burial-place of Wordsworth, recalling the witty but not unbiting sarcasms of Byron on "waggoners," "excursions," "little boats," &c., &c., picturing to myself the two poets of that day, only two skeletons in this! then I looked within the railed enclosure and counted, side by side, four flat, even stone slabs, all precisely similar, and all equally unpretentious—none higher nor lower than another, none broader nor narrower than another, none longer nor shorter than another, none greater nor less than another: no "*Siste Viator*," no inscription, no epitaph, nor epigraphical appeal either adorned or disfigured the grey unruffled smoothness of their surface, and there was nothing there *but* that mute simplicity that addressed itself to, or arrested, the passer-by. These unobtrusive stones that lay

so peacefully and harmoniously alongside of each other were simply inscribed with the names, ages, and dates of birth and death respectively of "William Wordsworth," "Mary Wordsworth," "Mary Quillinan," "Edward Quillinan;" and yet what a feud had the union of the two latter created between them and the two former when these four skeletons were dressed in their flesh,

" After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel asked and wisdom given,
After mutual prayers to Heaven ;
Child and parent "

had become hopelessly estranged; animosity between them ran high; disobedience on one side, dissatisfaction on the other, displeasure leading to separation on both! . . . and now? . . . Why now they all four sleep here calmly, silently, passively, side by side, within a dozen square yards of ground, and I should like to know in what way it can matter to any one the value of one straw whom the daughter of William and Mary Wordsworth married, or whether (as there are no descendants) she ever married at all. It is therefore evident that (at least as far as this world is concerned), if we only wait long enough, "nothing signifies."

The battle of our life is brief,
The alarm—the struggle—the relief—
Then sleep we side by side !

Whether these things will signify or not in *another* world is another question.

Yet see with what entire contentment R gnier, recog-

nised by Henri IV. as one of the four "*meilleurs esprits de son temps*," resigns himself to the "be all and end all" of this life :—here is his epitaph written anticipatively by himself.

" J'ai vescu sans nul pensement
Me laissant aller doucement
A la bonne loi naturelle,
Et ne scay pourquoy la Mort
A bien voulu songer à moy
Qui n'ay jamais songé à elle."

In the same spirit, was "*Le Régent*" wont to say (and to do it too)—

" Si la vie est un passage
Sur ce passage au moins jetons des fleurs."

And what a contrast to Carlyle, whose philosophy is all the other way up: do any of you remember among many striking passages—striking and suggestive too—in his "*Past and Present*," the following, where he deals with "*Happiness*," pooh-poohing it altogether, though I have heard of a very simple rule for securing it, to wit: "Go without your breakfast and lunch and afternoon tea, and when dinner-time comes, won't you be happy"?

However this is what Carlyle says:—"Happy! my brother! First of all what difference is it whether thou art happy or not? To-day becomes yesterday so fast. All *to-morrows* become yesterdays, and then there is no question whatever of happiness, but quite another question . . . OUR WORK. Behold that or the want of it remains for all times and all eternities."

Mind you, I don't quote Carlyle because I admire his

character, but because he put forward in quaint and seizing language shrewd and subtle truths: he *wrote* like a philosopher, whether he lived like one, his candid biographer has fully enabled us to judge. That is a case of "Save me from my friends," if you will.

I am afraid, however, Carlyle is not absolutely singular in his inconsistency, and that there are others in the world (alas! I plead guilty myself) who fret over what they perfectly well know will not only turn out to be, but often actually *are*, the veriest trifles.

What a great commander is he—beyond all names of greatness—not who knows how to command others, but who is able to command *himself*. If ever any rule of conduct deserved to be written, ay, caligraphed in letters of gold and hung perpetually before our eyes, it is this: under whatever provocation,

NEVER LOSE YOUR TEMPER,

"especially," as Pitt is said to have shrewdly added, "during business hours."

Won't you confess, my dear friend and reader—just privately to me, you know—I won't peach, because I am as weak on this point as you can possibly be—that you never feel so small, so humiliated, so contemptible, as the moment after you have been in a passion?—quite a short passion will do it, and the very next instant you see, not only how foolish you must look, but all the advantage you have thrown away by it: . . . but it is too late, you can't unsay anything; and the worst is that half an hour later, you will go and do exactly the same thing

again, *knowing* all the folly of it. Shakespeare said, and has got much applause for saying it—"What a piece of *work* is man!" I say, and shall very likely get no applause for saying it, and yet it is equally true—"What a piece of *contradiction* is man!"

It is bad enough to lose your patience with an equal, but to lose it with a child or a servant is forty-nine or fifty times worse. You have cut off all possibility of righting matters—so far as matters ever *can* be righted. All square-minded people are ready to acknowledge themselves in the wrong; but how can you apologise to a child or a servant without putting yourself in a false position? They may have been guilty of an offence at which you were justly irritated, and it was your duty to make them understand that you did *well* to be angry; but not in that *way*, and now you have to condone their misconduct and put *yourself* in the wrong, or else to leave them under the impression that you think it right to storm and rave and reciprocate loud words. It is a mess we ought not to get into, for we *can't* hobble out again.

But I think I must have digressed again and therefore recall my thoughts, and yours, to the empty omnibus, where, without knowing it, I have been all the time continuing to look out of window. The folks are still hurrying to and fro, and I begin to comprehend the farmer of untravelled memory, who, visiting London for the first time, stepped aside and stood up under a doorway waiting there patiently, hour after hour, to "let the crood go by."

—Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis, at ille
Labitur ac labetur in omne volubilis ævum!

which, you know, is only a figure of speech such as you may remember Tennyson has employed in his song of "The Brook," and the simile is good, though it would have been better without the "but." Mankind "comes and goes," it is true, while the river only "goes:" but if the river may be said to "flow on for ever," so may the human stream, for the fact is, neither the one nor the other really flows, as the "Bard of Night" has more truthfully, and perhaps not less poetically, pointed out.

"Life glides away, Lorenzo, like a brook
For ever changing, unperceived the change!
In the same brook none ever bathed him twice,
To the same life none ever twice awoke.
We call the brook the same; the same we think
Our life, though still more rapid in its flow,
Nor mark the much irrevocably lapsed
And mingled with the sea."

The next consideration that strikes me is the average *modern* stature of these "men who come and go," and the deterioration that seems to be taking place in the outward *physique* of the British race. We would not have them "8 feet 9" and weak in proportion, but surely there were not so many under-sized fellows to be seen in the streets thirty years ago, and it is humiliating to recognise as a fact that our national standard is so rapidly dwindling that a tall Englishman is now rather the exception than the rule, and we no longer carry the day in this particular among European nations.

I was out in what it is considered æsthetical to term "the gloaming," one night some few years ago and crossing a

West-end Square, the lamps being as usual mighty few and far between, and of course dulled by a sort of a kind of mist ; in short the light was quite sufficiently uncertain to have accounted for the adventure of that gentleman who—

“ Having gone to the station to wait for his sister,
In the thick of the smoke and the fog he just missed her,
And never found out his *mistake* . . . till he'd kissed her.”

Of course any one who had never seen a London fog might think this was accidentally done for the purpose, but we smoke-ridden cockneys know better. Well, a little beyond me on the kerb, conveniently (not to say suspiciously) near an open area gate, stood a motionless scarlet object about 4 ft. 6 in. high. Pillar boxes were at that time of smaller dimensions than now, and I naturally took it for one. No such thing, however ; just as I was going to put two letters and a newspaper into him, to my consternation it moved, and I discovered it to be a pocket-sample of our brave national defenders. He was at that moment, however, not only arm-less but also perfectly harmless, and in truth he was more afraid of me than I of him, for there could be no doubt his guilty conscience made him suspect I knew all about Sophonisba-Jane and the cold mutton and the policeman he was meanly robbing of his recognised privileges !

But let us go back to our pedestrians who have never ceased (collectively of course, but still), like the wandering Jew, walking on and on ; yes, those twofold human streams, eternally crossing each other, never fail, never flag, their double source seems exhaustless ; morning, noon,

and night itself, finds them still at it. An equal stream in each direction: wherever there is a channel cut, the irrepressible current immediately pours into, and along, it. If four streets, or five or six converge—a “seven dials”—there will always be just so many streams to fill them, not one will run dry! Open a new street anywhere you like, and it is forthwith filled with passengers; you needn’t wait to prove it: the human footstep will follow the track day after day, year after year. Come back in five, in ten years’ time, you might think you had never been away: whatever else may have changed, that ceaseless flow which has been going on ever since is still moving along. It has grown no older though your hair may have changed from gold to silver, though all the once “brand new” tenements round about have become grey and are crumbling: the stream you saw of yore consisted of individuals young, middle-aged, and old; it may be described in the same words now. They walk now just as they walked then; there is no alteration in their attitude, their rapidity, their apparent preoccupation, and certainly none in their mode of locomotion. And now I think of it, why *do* they walk? Why does *any* one walk? What first made him adopt the bipedal in preference to the quadrupedal method of progression, for had this been maintained it would have been so much more expeditious a movement and probably we should then have considered it fully as graceful. It is obviously the *natural* way of getting along. We need not cite the example of other animals, we have only to observe our own unconventionalised, unsophisticated babies. What child ever stood

up of its own accord and walked away on its behind feet? It is in accordance with all experience, all tradition that there was a time in the history of each individual when he hadn't an idea how to set about walking, tumbled down if any one put him up on his feet, and rolled about or resorted spontaneously (for no one ever taught him this) to the crawling expedient when he wanted to get from one place to another, and how quickly he could get along, that way, too!



What now, if he had then been left to his own devices? Who taught him to walk, and why was he interfered with? Who taught his teacher, and the one who taught the teacher and

that teacher's teacher, and so on all the way back to we don't know whom, nor even what? Not that I can see in the "germ" theory, however ingenious, any solution or approach to a solution of the great enigma of creation; a self-existent "germ," however simple its organisation, is fully as difficult of conception as a self-existent God, and the development-theory lays itself open to a great many questions which any fool might ask but which no wise man, however wise, could answer: and even if we admit the germ theory, it in no way helps to answer the question of questions—*What is the origin of Life?* life in the abstract first, but also life in the countless applications of the word.

It appears—see an article in *Nature* of April 14, 1881, entitled, “The European Prehistoric Races,” signed A. H. Keane—that “in July last were discovered in a cave in the commune of Spy (Namur) two skeletons, a *post mortem* examination of which satisfies the writer that they belonged to a race of human beings who did walk on all fours.” “The evidently angular position,” he says, “of the *femur* and *tibia* imply a non-erect or stooping attitude in standing and walking.” He supposes this to have been the form of the Palæolithic and pre-glacial race; there is therefore no reason why Adam should not have been built on the same model, and it is curious to reflect on how things would have turned out if no one had discovered the art of walking bi-pedally, or, having found it out, the discoverer had let the secret die with him.

Ovid, in his account of the creation, appears to take for granted that man’s proficiency in stepping out dates from his remote beginning, and he is most circumstantial in his description, thus:

“Os homini, sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus;”

but he cites no authority in support of this his *hipsey-dicksey*, nor do we see the fact stated anywhere else in accounts of man’s origin considered by some more orthodox. Man has been described as “created in the image of God,” but as we have no opportunity of knowing what that image was, we are no nearer knowing what created man was originally like.

I remember dining many years ago with Professor

Adams of Cambridge, and somehow our talk went back to the early days of the historic world. The Professor's idea of the first man was a very grand one. He argued that being in the very image of God he might fairly be allowed all the Miltonian endowments, moral and material, and his theory was that mankind had been gradually deteriorating ever since.

I recollect replying that it was quite natural, with his patronymic, that such should be *his* opinion, but that did not prevent other theorists from believing that the human race had gone on *improving* ever since: the fact being that none of us know anything about the matter. However, to those who are attracted by the doctrine of development, it may be satisfactory to feel that that theory offers nothing antagonistic to the Mosaic account, which simply states that God created man, without entering into the mode of his creation or the length of the period (or "day") occupied in producing him, which therefore, as it may have extended over a thousand or even ten thousand years, may have afforded sufficient opportunity for his gradual evolution from a jelly-fish or even a microbe.

If development be a wonderful thing, so is walking; in fact what *is* there that is not marvellously, bewilderingly wonderful from the moment we begin to think of it, to turn it inside out and examine it *intus et in cute*? A cute philosopher therefore treads on wonders every blessed moment of his life, because to him every object is a matter for reason and reflection, while the "Peter Bells" of the world, absorbed in their material cares and

interests and preoccupied *de lodice paranda*, are content to plod on with the vague consciousness that a certain season of the year will bring back on the river's brim "the yellow primrose;" but what it is, and why it is there, is a question at once too simple and too complicated for their muddled and grovelling brain: at least this *was* so before man was a school-board-educated animal, and before the primrose was a political symbol; *mais nous avons changé tout cela*, alas!

A young lady, not *very* young but probably still on her promotion, is my next neighbour. On her lap is a small pile of books; they are marked by the well-known red label of "The London Library;" the topmost one lies open, and she has paused as if posed by some puzzle on the page before her. In my capacity of "observer" I consider it no indiscretion to glance over the lines which have had the effect of so completely abstracting their reader from the consciousness of sublunary things. Strange to say, I find it is a volume of Wordsworth. Now what can the tame, watery Lake-poet have written that could impress any young lady so powerfully? It is, I perceive, a short poem which I remember very well, and its first line is, "What is life?"

The question undoubtedly is a suggestive though not a very original one, nor yet one very unusual for a poet to ask, indeed many poets have asked it; but the subject is so vast and so complex that the inquiry becomes tolerably engrossing to a reflecting mind, especially if you really mean to answer it; hence, no doubt, the thoughtful attitude of my neighbour. If that be her intention, I

wonder how she means to begin, and under what aspect she proposes to regard it; there are so many ways of reading that short word "life!" It expresses, beyond the primary, simple idea of vitality (which, however, is so complex), so *many* states and conditions; it is more puzzling than that protean word "box," which so spritelily escapes the patient foreign student of our language, although he is persuaded he has at last caught its true signification, and has avidly seized on it in "ze Aingleish boxe:" there is, however, this difference; the multifarious significations of the word "life" to which I allude, are neither philological nor etymological. Even when we have dismissed its broad meaning as applied to creation generally, as "too subtle to be defined, and only to be described by its phenomena," we find it capable of qualifications severally associating it with contending ideas, the juxtaposition of which becomes extremely grotesque; for there is perhaps in all nature no nicer barrier than that which divides the sublime from the ridiculous.

Life, regarded as that inexplicable wonder of wonders—*vitality*—must, I think, be admitted as common to *all* existing things, for who shall say at what phase of creation it ceases? The microscopic *rotifera*, whose very existence is a new discovery, has, under the revelations of scientific instruments, been found to have not only life but instincts and volition; why should we not learn later on, that there is a pulse in stones, a heart perhaps in the flinty rock, intelligence in fire, and a conscience in the ocean?

Where does life stop? Shall we who cannot so much as comprehend it, presume to set even an ideal limit to its presence!

"What is life?" Ah! what indeed *is* life? Yes, many poets and philosophers have asked that bewildering question, but like that rival interrogation, "What is truth?" not one of them has answered it to his own—still less to any other's—satisfaction.

Mostly these inquirers have seemed to treat it under one alone of its phases, social life generally, disregarding contingent modifications, and have answered or rather *tried* to answer that.

Here is Schopenhauer's idea of it.

"The life of every individual," he says, "if we survey it as a whole and in general, and lay stress on its most significant features only, is really always a tragedy, though examined in detail it may bear the character of a comedy."

Scarcely, if at all, less gloomy than the "Apostle of pessimism" is Alfred de Vigny, who calls it—

"Un accident sombre entre deux sommeils infinis,"

an idea which Carlyle has also engendered, if he have not "borrowed"—thus: "between these two silences occur all human sounds."

All of them make it out to be a *solemn* business, defying that dictum of the Talmud, "The Spirit of God rests on man only in his gladness." Here is De Quincey talking of "Life's drear descent;" and Lord Lytton saying—

"This which we call dying is only *ceasing* to die,
The hard thing was to live," &c.

Young has the same thought—

“Our births are but our deaths begun,
And cradles rock us nearer to the tomb.”

Corneille and also Casimir Delavigne express the same idea in other words—

“Chaque instant de la vie est un pas vers la mort.”

Georges Sand takes a less morose view of life and thinks we make it worse than it need be. . . . “Ne prenons nous pas,” she says, “la vie, à rebours? ne nous jetons nous pas dans les mille dédales de la vie factice?” . . . and no doubt she is so far right that although civilisation has of necessity placed us under artificial influences, and half the miseries under which we groan are pricks from what De Quincey calls “the cactus hedge of conventionality,” yet is conventionality a *necessity* of civilisation, and we have no power to escape its dictates. It is in its measure a necessity of any kind of community-life, and the very savages live under the trammels of a social tyranny of their own.

On the other hand, conventionality has its advantages. I forget who it was who said, somewhat worldlily it is true, “Conventionality is a great comfort, people never know what you think.”

Champfleury describes the ceaseless flow of life as if he saw it rolling on with mechanical inexorability.

“Ni les regards suppliants, ni les regards irrités n’ont le pouvoir d’accélérer ni de retarder le balancier de cuivre peu soucieux des passions humaines qui marque indif-

féremment morts, naissances, amours, amitiés, joies, haines, duels, commerce, rendezvous, les grandes actions et les misères navrantes, de l'humanité."

I wonder whose is the following:

"Man's life contains a thousand springs,
And ends if one goes wrong ;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long !"

Nor do I remember where it was I once read, but the sentiment might be Voltaire's:

"Vivre est une maladie dont le sommeil nous soulage toutes les seize heures ; c'est un palliatif : la mort est le remède."

I know it was Sterling who said—with metaphors worthy of a cockney—"What is our *present* life but the dusky and wavering image of the *future* and *final*, seen through the smoke of the *past* which for ever envelopes us?" This too is rather the reverse of cheerful, but is not so *cloudy* as it sounds.

Tacitus employs the word *agere* to mean indiscriminately to *live* and to *do*, and that too is Carlyle's appreciation.

Byron writes:—

" did man compute
Existence by enjoyment, and count o'er
Such *hours* 'gainst *years* of life—say, would he name three
score ? "

But I might go on burrowing in my memory till I had filled a dozen pages with more or less wise, more or less

poetical, more or less hazy conjectures; none of these worthies knew any more about the matter than we ourselves know: as Davenant says—

“ But ask not bodies doomed to die
To what abode they go;
Since knowledge is but sorrow's spy,
It is not safe to know.”

Probably man lacks that extra sense which would enable him to take it in: and indeed how can we be expected to prejudge anything? You might as well ask a critic for his opinion of a tragedy of which he has not yet seen the last act: it is only from the world that follows, that we can even comprehend the nature of this which has preceded it. They are complement and supplement to each other: as Crabbe Robinson once remarked to me—“ If there isn't another world, all I can say is, this one's a decided failure.”

But it was Wordsworth who started us on this voyage of discovery which brings us back to the feet of the old Greek philosophers.

“ Thus wisely spoke Athena's wisest son,
One thing we know, that nothing can be known.”

And this is how Wordsworth puts it—

“ What is life? It is a bubble
Launched upon a stormy sea,
Tossed upon the tide of trouble,
Floating to Eternity.”

I quote from memory, but I know what he says is very like that, and it has rather a taking ring about it, and isn't untrue as far as that and the subsequent stanzas

go; but *that* notion of life is very limited; it describes one view of it only—the life of man, and of that, one phase only—*social* life in a civilised and therefore artificial and mismanaged community.

Now even this “social life” has many subdivisions; there are public life and private life; active life and idle life; fast life and slow life; business life and fashionable life; town life and country life; high life and low life; life professional, commercial, official, and officious; and even that unphilosophical, selfish, degraded life as the *viveur* understands it: bubbles all, but bubbles of all degrees of inflation, all hues. Some mere soap-bubbles that gently, insensibly, burst without ever being so *much* as “launched;” some, tougher, more tenacious bubbles, that will bear a good deal of pressure before they burst, but even these burst at last. Poets generally, who have made a line out of the three words—“What is life?” and have then written more lines to answer it, have confined themselves to the one variety Wordsworth has dealt with:—

Pope wrote on behalf of Gay, deceased—

“Life is a jest, and all things show it;
I thought so once, and now I know it.”

And I remember some very impressive lines of the Spanish poet Espronceda, penned with that graceful simplicity of thought and freshness of conceit which so singularly characterise the writers of the Peninsula:

“Que es la vida? Un frenesi.
Que es la vida? Un ilusion.

Una sombra, una ficcion :
 Y el mayor bien es pequeña
 Y los sueños sueño son ! ”

Which may be rendered thus, but it is difficult to hit off the originality of the original :

“ What is life ? It is a madness.
 What is life ? a mere illusion.
 Fleeting shadow, fond delusion,
 Shortlived joy that ends in sadness,
 Whose most steadfast substance seems
 But the dream of other dreams.”

Graceful and poetical, and true as any affirmation can be of a thing on which we have no hold, for while we contemplate and examine it, it escapes us ; how unsatisfactory therefore ! We talk of “ life ” as we talk of the “ present ” time, and never perceive how impalpable and intangible are both ; that in fact with scarcely a shake of the letters which form the words “ Now here ” we have “ No where.” As in the words of Persius—

“ Fugit hora, hoc quod loquor, indè est,”

and of Boileau—

“ Le moment où je parle est déjà loin de moi.”

Is not then life the most subtle of all our illusions ? It escapes us every minute we live. We think of the present as if it existed. Where is it ? At what period of our existence do we realise it ? Why is it too vaporous for even imagination to hold it ? During the first half of our existence we live in the future ; at that stage

“ Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest.”

During the second we live in the past, wandering on

“ . . . the solitary shore,
Where all lies foundered that was ever dear.”

Nombelle, the Spanish writer, has put it thus:—

“ La vida es una serie de acciones y de recuerdos.
El hombre durante el primer periodo de su existencia, obra.
Suo ultimos años se formen de recuerdos.
El primer periodo es de pasion, el segundo de analisis.”

Byron too has asked the unanswered and unanswerable question thus:—

“ Can this be death ! then *what is life* . . . or death ? ”

but he takes the deeper view of the word “ life ; ” for the question occurs in the course of those thrilling and pathetic stanzas * in which, passing with an audacity which the genius of the author of Don Juan alone could justify, from the ridiculous to the sublime, he recounts the assassination of the Italian officer in the streets of Ravenna. No one who ever read that grand and dramatic description is likely to forget it ; but the outcome of this thought is (perhaps of necessity) disappointing, for after his earnest “ gaze ”—

“ To try if he could wrench aught out of death
Which could confirm or shake or make a faith ”—

all he can arrive at is that

“ . . . it was all a mystery ! ”

How often has all this been thought before . . . how often said ! But has it ever been said more impressively ?

* 36 et seq. Cant V. Don Juan.

There is another phase of "life" we have not yet attacked—post-mortal life or life eternal; and how endless have been the speculations upon that!—

One question more than others all
From thoughtful minds implores reply;
It is, as breathed from star to pall,
What fate awaits us when we die?

For the most part, human aspirations are directed to a spiritual existence and a surviving personal identity, while pantheistic minds seem, strangely enough, content with the prospect of an unconscious, impersonal, participated existence vaguely and undistinguishably merged in a resuscitated creation.

It is asserted that "there is scarcely a tenet to be found in any creed which does not—at least in its germ—exist in the Hindu religion," and among the Upanishads we find one which thus propounds the "poor Indian's" idea of future life, being according to the ancient Oriental philosophy neither more nor less than the ceaseless circulation of matter—

" See dying vegetation life sustain,
See life dissolving, vegetate again;
All forms that perish, other forms supply,
By turns we catch the vital breath . . . and die!
Like bubbles on the sea of matter borne,
They rise and break—and to that sea return."

If in our future state we, the "bubbles," are to return to the "sea"—to live there, but only as confounded in its waters, we are virtually dissolved, dispersed, annihilated; and to denominate this mere mixed, unindividualised

existence "life," is neither more nor less than an abuse of language.

The "untutored mind" of the Indian is, however, very far from being the only mind that accepts and assimilates this view, and strange it is that whereas we were taught formerly that matter perished and spirit survived, it is now the order of the day to believe the exact reverse.

The Upanishads, from which I have quoted, are of course indited on vegetarian principles, and while I have vegetarianism in my pen I will remark on the strangely fervent enthusiasm of its devotees and the ingenious reasons they have ferreted out to justify and sustain it; though it would carry us too far away to detail and discuss them here; indeed I should prefer had I space to record my own experience of the disastrous practical results I have observed. But there is another craze in the way of diet to which I may allow myself a brief allusion, viz., that of the pisciarrians, who contend that there is an *intellectual* advantage to be derived from living on the flesh of fish, recognised, they assert, by scientists (which?) as highly favourable to the nourishment of the "cerebral tissue," so that men who think, read or write, should fortify their brains by confining their *menu* to food of the most fishy description.

It seems to me that these good folks might be asked if they intend to cite as an illustration of their theory the mental exploits and intellectual superiority of fish-eating races who have surely tried the system long enough to be citable on such a question. What can they show us

among the Greenlanders and Laplanders, for instance, to encourage our belief in such a statement?

Possibly their idea is that phosphorus *ought* to be good brain-food, but there is nothing, as yet, to show that human creatures can assimilate it to the enlargement and development of brain tissue; nor yet, if they could, that it would have any effect on their intelligence. I don't pretend to be learned in skulls and their contents, though I confess the skull-eries of museums always have an interest for me; but I believe that the amount of intelligence in animals is estimated rather by the multiplicity



of convolutions in, than by the weight of, the cerebral substance.

But the wheels that are carrying me have ceased to revolve, for the very good reason that the 'bus has arrived at its journey's end, and if I had any doubt about it that is settled by the voice of the sluggard . . . no, the voice of the conductor, who—used to my mental aberrations—jogs me with a not un-gentle “ere ye har, sir.”

I admit that I *am* all there, and alight; and as I walk down the street homewards, I muse, among other things, on the component elements of a conductor and a conductor's life.



Physiology of the Omnibus-conductor—Influences of callings on character—Principles found in the Talmud—Doctors—And Lawyers—Shelters—A She-conductor—Eccentricities of French character—French morals and French novels—Systems of collecting fares—The Paris Conductor—His ways—"Cabbages"—A Conductor who married, confident he could live on that vegetable—Sobriety of omnibus-servants—The Bishop's coachman less sober—Risks of the Company—Tricks of Conductors—Vigilance of the Company—Discourtesies to the public—How visited by the Company—Hardships of the Conductor's lot—No tobacco, no Christmas-boxes, few tips—Monotony of his "calling"—A "standing" grievance—Subjectivity of Time—Unmelodious noises—their effect—An illustration—Sam Lover—Charles Lever—John Parry—Genius—Some particulars of a Conductor's daily tasks and habits—Temptations—Honesty—Anecdotes—Rivalries—Characteristics—the Conductor's end.

If the 'bus-driver deserves to be physiologised, his companion and supplement the conductor is fairly entitled to be similarly investigated, and we may remark that

the class he represents is likewise composed of very many varieties.

There appears to be a general idea that those who pursue the same calling must *ipso facto* be marked by the same characteristics; even as among the Jews of old there was a prevalent assumption that all ass-drivers were rogues; all pigeon-breeders, liars; all camel-drivers, honest men, &c., while the Talmud considered all physicians as destined for hell. Medical-professors, however, we may remark in passing, would seem to have been among all nations the butt of more or less malicious sarcasm, and I am afraid that, as regards these latter, public opinion has not much changed, nor in this lawyer-ridden country do we scruple to hold a very uncompromising and very sweeping opinion also of lawyers . . . and no wonder!

Any one who frequents omnibuses, may very readily discern that there may have been considerable social inequality in the antecedents of 'bus-conductors, and this fact undoubtedly tells upon their dealings with ourselves, so that we can hardly speak of them in an unsorted aggregate, though we, the public (entirely preoccupied with our own affairs and intent only on getting safely in and out of our vehicle) see in this functionary as we pass him, nothing more than a hoarse; often coarse, biped, clothed in garments more or less the worse for weather, with a more or less indistinct vision of a badge somewhere about him, and a vague idea of a clumsy leathern bag slung on somehow, containing his change. If he speak roughly, we pay him the compliment of taking it

as a matter of coarse(ness) which does not surprise us, for we are apt to prejudge "it his nature to;" if, on the other hand, his address be of a less ungentle type, we scarcely observe the difference, because everything about him is a matter of in-difference to us: as far as we are concerned he is a mere machine for receiving our fare if we have the exact sum handy, and for returning us the change if we have not. Nevertheless, if his contemporary



the cabman have a soul, it is presumable that he may lay claim to a similar possession, though no one seems to

have thought it worth while to establish the machinery of shelters, hot tea and buttered rolls, chops and bibles, steaks and tracts for the moral and spiritual benefit of the omnibus-conductor. True, omnibus-conductors would not have much opportunity for availing themselves whether of gospel or soup-kitchen privileges, if such had fallen to their moist and unreposeful lot ; still, an analogous contrivance might be imagined that would meet their needs and occasions, and exercise upon them its civilising influences. Let us hope that some benevolent and wealthy old lady, who either possesses no heirs or owning them, has any just (or unjust) cause for wishing to disappoint their covetous expectations, may take compassion on omnibus-conductors in their turn and institute some such palliation of their exposed condition, if only to show they are not altogether overlooked in the catalogue of hardworked humanity. After all, the conductor's work is really harder than that of the cab-driver, for while he gets about the same amount of drenching in wet, and of scorching in hot, weather, he has to maintain all day a much more fatiguing vigilance. The cabman, like *bonus Homerus*, can nod now and then, the conductor has to be *always* as wide awake as Jack Shepherd. As to the effects of rain, the probabilities are that in a climate like ours he ends by becoming amphibious, and we are surprised at the sympathising tone in which he often enquires whether "any gentleman will ride outside," under a dripping sky, "to oblige a lady," magnanimously ignoring the drenching from which nothing can save his own skin. I was witness

one day to a curious reversal of this order of things. Being in the Park Lane 'bus on a wet day (the number inside *au grand complet*) a gentleman looked wistfully in, but was refused by the conductor on the plea that the number was made up; the would-be passenger looked out at the weather and then turned his longing eyes inward to the snug shelter, but was nevertheless about to withdraw when a lady (a he-woman probably) with short hair, a round hat, a lapelled "tailor-made" cloth coat well buttoned up, and stout boots, called out in a *firm* voice, "There's room for one, I'll ride outside;"



and suiting the action to the word she vacated her place and proceeded to mount; moreover, as the conductor was about gallantly to stop the vehicle for her greater convenience, she exclaimed with a contemptuous laugh, "You needn't stop the 'bus for me, I shall be up in a trice," ascending with a muscular inde-

pendence which fully justified the intimation.

I don't think we ever had female omnibus-conductors in England, or if so they have not allowed themselves to be discovered; but this has more than once occurred in France, where women have frequently served in the army and have graduated to the highest promotions. I

have myself seen and conversed at the *Invalides* with two brave officers, one a *colonelle*, the other a *générale*, who, only after their death, were found to have been women—a mother and daughter!

Some years ago a little romance of the omnibus-step went the round of the Paris press among the "*faits divers*;" it related to a quiet, well-conducted conductor who gave the name of Louis Collin, but was familiarly known among the fraternity as "*Le Petit Louis*." He was respected by his employers for his honesty and steadiness, among his comrades for his ready, obliging disposition, and among the *habitués* of his line for the gentleness and civility of his manners. Suddenly the quietude of his demeanour changed into an observable sadness and preoccupation, and one day, being too ill to attend to his duties he was obliged to get himself replaced by a substitute; a few days after, those who enquired for "*Le Petit Louis*" learned that he was dead!

After his death the singular but harmless and touching little secret of his life came out. Louis Collin was a woman;—in fact, the young widow of the real Louis Collin who, on her husband's death, having no means of supporting herself and their infant child, had, under the disguise of man's apparel and in the character of her husband's brother, applied for and obtained the post he had vacated. All went well till one night when the poor young mother, who had so heroically undertaken the laborious work which enabled her to live and to place her child at nurse, on going home found her infant

seriously ill. Such care as she was able to give it did not avail to save its life, and no longer feeling any interest in the solitary existence to which she had been reduced, she gave way to despondency; the moral courage which had supported her under the labour, fatigue, and exposure of the occupation she had chosen, failed her, and death had found her an easily-vanquished prey.

Such freaks sound strangely to English ears; but dear me! in how many, many ways do French ideas and practices indicate that the difference between the two races is far more marked than appears to a superficial observer. The French are an imaginative, impulsive, unreflecting, and, if I may coin the word, an un-self-commanded people, while we tamely adopt plodding, straightforward, matter-of-fact ways, and an innate sense of dignity and propriety restrains us from doing startling and eccentric things; we certainly have—from whatever motive—a salutary consciousness of the claims of conventionality.

It is undoubtedly more in accordance with French than with English modes of feeling that women should pass themselves off as men and carry on a life of man's work; there is a touch of romance in the act which would easily reconcile a French mind to it, and it is so comparatively harmless that we might wish there were no more serious evidence to be adduced as to the contrast between the ethics of the two nations. Let any one not impressed with the conviction of this contrast go through a course of French novels—it scarcely matters whose: with a few honourable exceptions they all tell the same

disreputable tale, all describe the same deplorable morals, all paint the same weak, frivolous, unscrupulous, unchastened characters, all draw the same false and illogical conclusions, and all employ to a greater or less extent the same impure language. In their society-romances there is the same complacent ir-recognition of vice in its very presence and in presence of its inevitable consequences, which are treated as misfortunes rather than as well-merited results. That there has been going on for some time past a complete revolution in the light literature of France is lamentably plain and as explainable as plain, but the explanation is not creditable either to French taste or French morality. It is evident that nasty books command the largest circulation, and the writer whose pen leads the day finding it profitable to gratify this unnatural taste thus unblushingly courts the favour of the majority. Other writers, fascinated by a style which exhibits ability and power of unexampled brilliancy, and forgetting their mission and their traditions, have abandoned their original style and their higher principles to follow in the muddy path he has tracked out with so much subtlety.

To select repulsive subjects—if the motive be a high one—may be excusable, but it is not pardonable in any writer to gloat over, repeat and dwell upon distasteful incidents, to minutely explain with gratuitous obscenity details which, if they *must* appear in print, are such as, even in days when Swift and his contemporaries employed terms the freedom of which has long been tabooed in our own country, Gibbon considered present-

able only when "concealed under the veil of a learned language."

We know that the unsavoury writer in question was born in a very low rank of life, and seeing, as the French say, that *La caque sent toujours le hareng*, we ought not perhaps to be surprised at the delight he takes in wallowing in the mire of filthy thoughts, nor at the enjoyment he finds in expressing them filthily; at the same time we cannot help asking into what reeking sewers of what degraded alleys, even in France, he can have groped, to ferret out the disgusting terms with which he fills his pages. Our first idea when, having tried to read one of these volumes we lay it aside with indignation, is one of wonder that such publications should find a circulation beyond the slimy slum-life into which they drag us and that French society should tolerate, much more encourage, this coarse and degrading literature: and yet why should we be surprised? Why should we suppose that French society and French *prolétaires* are any more delicate, or more refined, or more moral, than their own writers tell us they are? They must know better than we can, the extent of their own national vice and licentiousness; and hopelessly depraved must they consider it when they can thus unblushingly exhibit to the scorn and obloquy of the civilised world, the shame of their own brothers and sisters. Why have they not the decency to veil their family failings and at least try keep a good face before outsiders? As Cremonini the Modenese philosopher wrote, "*Intùs ut libet, foris ut moris est.*" Not very lofty morality, but evincing at least a sense of shame.

What is to become of the youth of such a country? A "Pagan" writer has left us a noble caution intended for his own times—" *Maxima puero debetur reverentia;*" in spite of Christianity and civilisation, what do they know of the delicacy of this sentiment in France?—in France, where we are justified in supposing the characters introduced to us in novels, are moral types of the educated as well as of the rougher classes of our day.

A young English relative of mine, married to a Frenchman, told me that a *Vicomtesse* of her acquaintance, on friendly terms and no doubt thinking it would be kind to initiate her into Parisian ways, said to her one day—" *Pourquoi ne prenez vous pas un amant, ma chère, c'est très bien porté?*" And the French husbands of her acquaintance seemed perfectly taken aback at her indignant astonishment when they proceeded in the most matter-of-course way to make love to her. She, like many others, had supposed it was only in French *novels* that such things occurred. Alas no! these novels are drawn from life—actual life!

But we have diverged somewhat freely from the 'bus-conductor and his fares; indeed I believe I was just going to touch on the various methods of collecting them, and it always seems to me that the system which has long prevailed in England is open to the great objection that it puts needless temptation in the collector's way, and the wonder is, not that he occasionally succumbs to, but that he ever resists, it: should we ourselves, if we had not had more principle put into us than he has? Indeed some of the companies seem to mistrust this

imperfect method of collecting the fares, and to have improved upon it in various ways. Looking at the matter from the passenger's point of view, it is a decided annoyance: it is an undeniable bore to be obliged either to fumble for coppers while watching for one's destination, which the conductor rarely remembers for us, or, as the alternative, to be compelled to carry the fare ready in the hand till it pleases him to collect it: often indeed the whole concern has to stand still while some old lady who has just alighted into the mud and stands there ankle-deep in it, is turning out, in turn, her seventeen pockets in search for the cash.



It is greatly to be regretted, in the interest of the shareholders' pockets no less than the souls of the conductors, that some check-system cannot be adopted which by removing the opportunity would likewise neutralise the temptation to pilfer. How can any "Company" in its senses, with the faintest knowledge of human nature, expect that one of the humblest and

most miserable of its representatives needing everything that money would obtain for him, should carry about intact all day and deliver up untampered with at night, a heavy bagful of the coveted specie?

“The L.G.O. Company” still continues the ancient plan and appears to chance its results with equanimity; other proprietors have recourse to various expedients to diminish the risks to which they must very well know they are liable. The Road-car Company, though it has started on such “nothing-venture nothing-win principles,” has adopted perhaps the best that has hitherto been imagined; but besides this one, there is the pink-ticket system, and the white-ticket system, the blue-ticket system, and the collection by means of a glass box with a slit in the lid; which, however, creates the difficulty of giving change when a silver piece is offered; there is another system I have seen which cuts the gordian knot more abruptly, viz. that which does away with the conductor bodily, as in the infancy of the omnibus system, and leaves it to the honour of the passengers to drop their fare into a box fixed at the extreme end of the vehicle. A leather strap fastened by one end to the door, by the other to the driver, warns him when a passenger is about to enter or to alight, and he pulls up accordingly. Possibly there is now and then a dishonest passenger who tries to shirk his payment, but he could not manage it very frequently nor yet very easily with the eyes of the rest of the passengers upon him, and the rare occasions on which a loss may occur in this way, can bear no comparison to the economy consequent on doing away with the conductor’s wages *and* pilfering.

We have certainly however, with all these contrivances, not yet arrived at the security ensured by the French plan, by which, all fares being of the same amount

and paid as soon as the passenger has taken his seat and his entrance has been marked off by the check-wheel ringing its bell, every *centime* is accounted for and is given up at the end of each journey; nor can any one complain of the charge even if he should not want to go the whole distance; and if he choose to travel outside, where the seats are extremely comfortable and the atmosphere much pleasanter than within, the cost of being conveyed from the *Porte Maillot* to the *Hotel de Ville* and more expeditiously than any *fiacre* can take him, is expressed by the modest sum of 15c. or three halfpence, the distance being over three miles. Cheap as this, however, is, it scarcely matches the London tariffs of recent date—the infallible result of competition.

There is a *bonhomie* for the most part about the Paris *conducteur* to which we do not often find a parallel in his London counterpart. The uniform he wears, and which is seldom untidy or dirty, gives him an official character of a certain respectability; he occasionally talks to the passengers, and there is often a good deal of humour in his observations, nor does it strike one as anything anomalous that he should communicate his ideas, more especially as notwithstanding this degree of familiarity he is never obtrusive and rarely impertinent. He avails himself of the privilege of taking a seat whenever there is a chance, and it is scarcely to be wondered at that he should, indeed it is matter for much greater surprise that the English conductor should be able to remain on his feet the whole time he is on duty—a stretch of

sixteen hours, while probably the anomalous position which combines jolting and standing still, is more fatiguing than the more natural action of walking the same distance, yet he seems to take it entirely as a matter of course. I have often wondered, not that he doesn't take a corner inside when there is one to spare, as does the French conductor without exciting any surprise on the part of the passengers, but that he never avails himself as he so easily might of one of the steps of the staircases with which nearly all the London omnibuses are now provided; the French *conduc-teur* too, has a broad black leather strap suspended at one side of the door-way for the purpose of being converted into a convenient seat whenever he chooses to hook it across to the other side, and as he is well protected from the rain by the projecting roof he may consider himself tolerably well cared for and considered, though he has not, it must be admitted, the "opportunities" which fall to the lot of the London 'bus-conductor. Of what these opportunities are worth, I can give you a tolerably good idea, from the history of one of the fraternity, known to me as a fact.

This young man began life as a page in a gentleman's service, being in due time promoted to the position of footman. Had he remained true to his colours and his buttons, he would in time have probably been breveted butler, or might have rivalled that gorgeous creature who in all the pomp and circumstance of plush and powder, airing himself beneath the portico of an aristocratic mansion in Portman Square, addressed to his double leaning against the other marble pillar, the *naïf* question

—"What *his* taxes, Thomas?"—sublimely ignoring that not only his powder, and the buttons that glittered on his plumage, but he himself, were all articles on which those mysterious "taxes" were levied!

The youth in question, however, never had the patience to arrive at this full-blown magnificence, but while all this possible splendour was yet in the bud, he actually got tired of being clothed in purple and silk stockings, and of faring sumptuously every day, and, having listened to the flattering tongue of a Servant's-Agency manager, he one morning informed his "employer" that "he thought he should like a change," indeed he "wished to *better* himself." The "change" suited the agency better than it suited him, for, of course, agencies flourish only on the credulity of foolish fellows, and could not exist at all if they did not find such to listen to their interested advice; the "bettering" was a matter of taste, but apparently it is one of those words of which servants, though they employ it, do not understand the meaning: the result therefore was that after vainly trying to "better himself" (!) in service, and being unable to dig, and unwilling to beg, he took another step in life, to wit the omnibus-step, where he had been assured there would be two very good strings to his bow—the honest earnings of his calling, and the fertile resource of the pence bag he would carry like the other Judas, and might treat much in the same way; for he was quite content "to be as one of the apostles."

In a short time he found his new calling answer so well and his prospects appeared so promising, that he ven-

tured, on the strength of them, to engage himself to a "young lady," and on a prudent friend observing to him that the pay of an omnibus-conductor seemed small for a couple to marry on, he replied:—"Oh, I shouldn't for a moment think of trying to live on that; I can always make my income up to my needs by 'cabbages.'"

From further information he gave, it was elicited that on this illicit principle conductors are, almost as a rule, vegetarians (I don't mean "V.E.M's."*), for they are quite satisfied with "cabbages" *purs et simples*, and don't trouble themselves about the other items allowed to those who adopt this sectarian nomenclature.

I have been assured that the loss to the "Company" would reach many thousands a year even supposing the driver and conductor abstracted no more than sufficient to pay for one half pint of beer each at the end of each journey they make during the day; and it is not, I fear, very likely that people who forecast their expenses on the number of "cabbages" they know they can secure with impunity, would be so forbearing as to keep within that limit; all I know is, I am glad I am a passenger and no longer a shareholder: the shares pay handsomely, but it is not pleasant to feel one is being robbed.

As far as a passenger may judge, both driver and conductor appear to be singularly sober in their habits; at all events I have never been able to detect any signs of intemperance in either while on duty: this is the more

* This is the recognised definition of a Vegetarian who ornaments his *menu* with the luxurious variety of vegetables, eggs, and milk.

creditable, as tippling is a vice from which even gentlemen's servants are not altogether free, and one that takes too frequent hold of a private Jehu.

Indeed, I could tell of a certain Bishop (who himself related the story to the friend from whom I had it) whose coachman, excellent in other respects, was a notorious transgressor in this particular. One night his lordship and wife had been dining out, and were returning home through a country road when it suddenly struck them that the carriage was rather irregular in its movements. The Bishop stopped his driver, and seeing what was the matter desired him to get down, and to walk home as best he might, for that under the circumstances he preferred to drive himself. Accordingly he mounted the



box, reached home, set down the lady, and drove the carriage round to the stables, where he was met by a groom :—

“How’s this, Jack?” says the latter, “why you’re drunker than ever, you’ve been and gone and went and put on the old bloke’s hat.”

In my various omnibus journeys I have had occasion to notice many little incidents relative to the collection of fares, but I am bound to say they rarely

illustrate dishonesty on the part of the conductor, who might often very easily demand them a second time.

One day, however, I was aroused by a fierce altercation between that functionary and an old woman—a thoroughly un-protected female.

“No, marm,” said he, with something more than emphasis, “you ast me wot the fare *was*, and I told you, but you never paid me.”

“I assure you I well remember giving you a three-penny bit, and you gave me a penny, and here it is.”

“Can’t ’elp yer penny, marm, I knows nothing about that, and has for threepenny bits, why, bless yer old soul, I daresay I’ve a ’underd on ’em—now you fork hout Missis, I ain’t a going to stop till I’m paid, and you’re now a ’underd yards beyond the Pantheon.”

Thus pressed, and there being no witness to appeal to, the little old lady had no choice but to comply, though I told the fellow I suspected from his manner it was an extortion, and I should report him for insolence relating all the circumstances at the same time. Of course the old lady *may* have been an habitual swindler, and I had no means of judging between them; indeed I never venture on an opinion unless both sides of the case are fairly before me, being mindful of that excellent maxim we get both from Hesiod and Phocides—

Μήτε δίκη δίκας, πρὶν ἀμφοῖν μῦθον ἀκοῦσης.

On another occasion a similar case occurred in my presence, but it was in a proprietary or “pirate” ’bus, and the intended victim was a stout, hale, business-like individual, wide awake, and well able to take care of himself.

"Nay, nay, my man," said he, on being applied to for the second time, "don't you try that little dodge on me; I'm up to this sort of thing, and whenever I get into a proprietary 'bus I take my precautions."

"Now shut up, will yer, that ain't no good, your precorshons ain't no bisness of mine," the rogue answered saucily, "you knows well enough, and all these 'ere gentlemen knows, you never paid me."

"All these 'ere gentlemen," however, replied they were not present at the payment, for there were only two besides myself, and as it happened, and as he knew very well, we had got in later than the disputant.

"Look here," said the party attacked, "all this bluster is quite needless, I'm only waiting to see a policeman, and give you in charge for extortion."

"Wot's a pleeceman got to do with it?"

"Simply this, that I shall have you searched, for I paid you with three *marked* pennies."

On hearing this, the rascal's tone underwent a marvellous change, and he quietly remarked, that of course "henny one might make a mistake, and if the gent remembered that, he was likely enough right," &c. &c., and with this he allowed him to pass out.

I alighted at the same time, and as we parted on the kerb he remarked to me, "My money *wasn't* marked, but having paid, and having no other way of proving the scoundrel's dishonesty, I adopted that plan of making him convict himself; I only wish it had been, and I would certainly have made an example of him."

On a recent occasion my halfpence having run dry I found in my waistcoat-pocket but a halfpenny and two farthings, which I accordingly tendered for my fare. The conductor (a road-car) put on an indignant scowl and displaying the coins on his palm asked the well-worn question, "What's this 'ere for?" As the answer was obvious I didn't trouble myself to reply, so he urged: "Them's fard'ns." I looked acquiescence and inquired, "What then; you don't mean you object to them?" "In coorse I do; 'ow would you like fard'ns?" "Well, it looks as if I had *had* to like them or they wouldn't have been in my pocket, besides I've lived long enough in the world to know I didn't come into it to do what I *liked*; still if you dislike farthings I will take any number off your hands." "Ain't yer got a penny?" "No, but I can give you a sovereign, or a £5 note, or a cheque on my banker if you have got change enough."

By this time the hilarity of my fellow-passengers had made the man feel the absurdity of his position, and if I had not been too shy I should have told them a parallel story of an elderly lady who having nothing but gold in her purse, could only pay her cab-fare by the help of some very small change she happened to find in her reticule and which just made up the shilling. The man turned it over in his hand and then remarked—

"Oos a goin' to count hall that? never you take the liberty to ride in *my* cab again unless yer worth a shill'n to pay for it."

That there are advantages in employing the omnibuses

of a Company in preference to the "pirates" I once witnessed a convincing illustration.

A lady-passenger had requested to be dropped at Berners Street, but the conductor (a roughish fellow this time) who, as usual, had paid little heed to his instructions, carried her nearly as far as Tottenham-Court Road and then coolly stopped to set her down. He had no suspicion of the setting-down that awaited himself.

She bore the inconvenience philosophically, partly perhaps because she had been ground to meekness in the matrimonial mill; partly also perhaps, because feeling herself defenceless she preferred not to provoke the probable addition of an insult, but she rose to depart with a very mild reproof on her lips: the conductor (a low bully), untouched by the magnanimity of her forbearance, replied so coarsely that he was at once called to order by a gentleman seated next the door.



"What 'a *you* got to do with it?" retorted the fellow, "you hain't along with 'er, and you've no call to interfere with me."

"You think not? Well, that remains to be seen—and felt too," answered the gentleman quietly.

"You see to yer hown business;" continued the conductor, mistaking the calmness of his adversary for timidity; "d'ye think I cares for the likes of you?—I've

lived too near a wood to be frightened by a 'owl, so you just shut up."

The passenger *said* nothing more, but he pulled very deliberately out of his pocket a bunch of keys, on the ring of which he carried a circular ivory ticket. This he turned towards the conductor. The effect was talismanic. It might have borne on it the Gorgon's head; at all events it was equivalent in power in the estimation of a 'bus-conductor to that petrifying sight, and it at once transformed him into the meekest and most abject of his kind, so that it was with almost graceful politeness he lifted his hat and said respectfully, "Beg pardon, sir; I'm sure, sir, didn't know who you was, sir." You would have thought *he* was another man.

"No, of course you didn't; it would be of very little use my being here if you could have guessed that."

"I'm werry sorry hindeed, sir."

"Ah!" said the director, "so am I; but it's too late for that now—too late to be sorry and too late to be civil; no, my man, your affair is settled."

"No, sir!" cried he still more persistently, "you don't mean that, sir? I didn't mean no 'arm, sir."

"I know nothing about what you meant," retorted the other, "I have only to do with what you did; you insulted that lady not only without any provocation, but though your behaviour to her demanded an apology, you added insolence to the inconvenience to which you had put her by your negligence. No, my friend, no such servants can remain on our staff."

The man was silenced, there wasn't much for him to

say, and his former volubility had altogether deserted him; but when we reached the Bank and Mr. Director got down, he flew after him—you would have thought he was a lightning conductor—with the usual plea of "wife and



children," about whom, if they existed at all, he probably cared very little, but it was to no purpose; though I heard no more, the gentleman's gestures were quite significant enough, and so were those of the conductor, who finding mitigation of his sentence hopeless, furiously shook his fist at him—behind his back—as he returned to the step from which he was so soon finally to descend and resumed his old style now there was nothing to be lost by it; and so this story of a "setting down" remains good with its moral wrapped up in it, and I can only hope it may meet the eye (or both eyes if they have two) of all violent and otherwise wicked conductors.

I once held shares in the "London General Omnibus Company," and I have always considered it a very admirable feature in their management that they exercise all the vigilance they can command over their *employés*; it is not unusual for the directors, besides travelling occasionally in their carriages themselves, to request shareholders to do the same and to report to the secretary any instances of misconduct they may observe.

Having myself one day met with an act of discourtesy similar to that I have cited, simply remarking to the man—"I don't know why you should so often give us too much for our money," and receiving a very impertinent reply, I considered it my duty to the public as well as to myself to report the offender, especially as when I announced my intention he had said he "didn't care, not he."

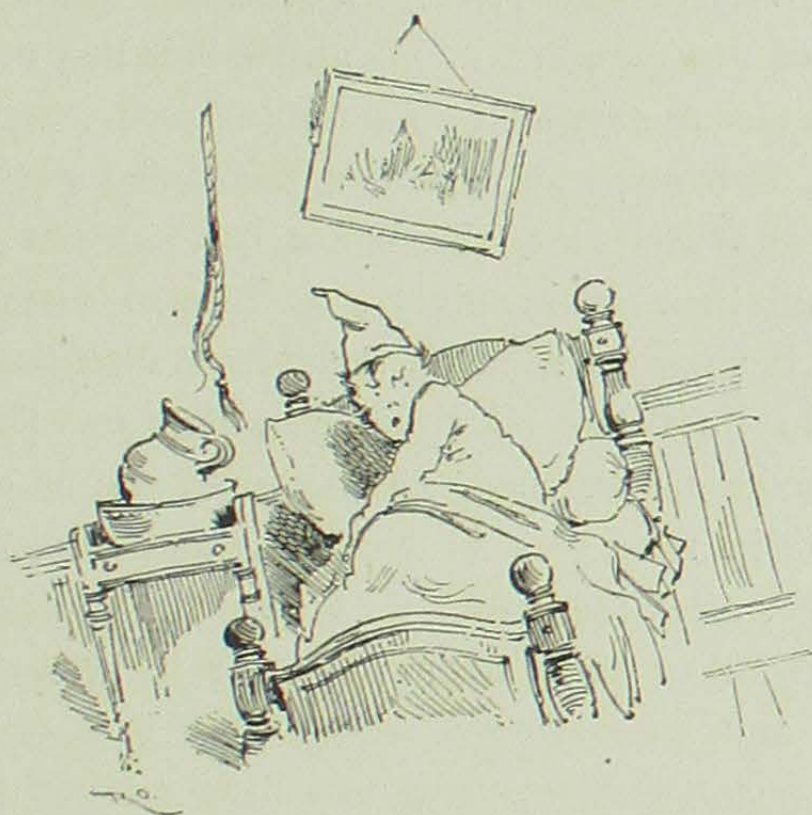
The secret of this callousness was explained when I learnt from the secretary that the man was at the time under warning to leave for previous incivility. On another occasion when a conductor protested I hadn't paid him, and insolently tried to collect a crowd to bully me into repayment I still refused, warning him I should report him. He didn't care, neither, so he said: two days after, however, he called at my house with his ear down, as the French say, and telling me he had been suspended, offered the most abject apology.

Still these are exceptions, and on the whole I can't say I think the public has much to complain of as regards the omnibus-conductor; his is a very hard life, his day's work must be a very exacting one, requiring unusual

moral and physical endurance. It is a more trying service, as we have shown, than that of his Paris contemporary, who enjoys certain small indulgences not without their value, and is unlike that of other public servants the monotony of whose life is relieved by the occasional expectation of a *douceur*,—though I remember once, but once only and on a bitterly cold day, to have seen all the passengers, following the example of one of their number, bestow small coins on one of the fraternity; still he neither claims nor receives Christmas-boxes, New Year's gifts, nor contributions to a "Summer excursion," which has not yet been inaugurated for these hard-worked sons of the road to whom the unvaried character of their lives may be truly said to be a standing grievance. Is the conductor not always on his feet, and therefore in one sense at least, always an upright man? Let it rain or shine, freeze or broil, blow or stifle, there he is, always on that step, from which he never gets a rise, (though seldom a fall); note that there is no "miserere" to an English 'bus, and the vertical position has to be maintained without any interval hour after hour. It is certainly true that some hours we pass seem much longer than other hours, just as the pound of feathers makes a deal more *show* than the pound of lead, and nothing is more true than the deferred hope which suggests time as "moving on leaden wings"—in this we have a combination of lead *and* feathers. An hour under the dentist's manipulation seems—I don't know why I shouldn't say *is*—considerably longer than an hour, *e.g.*, at the play. The conventional sixty minutes may easily be made into six

hundred if we measure them by our sensations, and as far as each individual is concerned that is the only accurate standard.

A curious illustration of this subjectivity of time came



before me lately. A friend sending me a description of the Riviera earthquake, wrote—"I was awakened by a violent rocking of my bedstead while the china and the sashes rattled, accompanied by a loud rumbling noise as of a number of people violently dragging about heavy furniture overhead. Strange to say, *I thought it would never come to an end*, yet you know, the seismological instruments show this shock to have lasted *four seconds*." The earthquake of Thrasimene, we know, wasn't so much as noticed, under a stronger preoccupation.

What has the rigid, uncompromising, incorruptible

clock to do with our real or imaginary sensations? Probably, were we to put into the witness-box one after the other all those who shared the effect of this shock, and to examine each one on the subject of its duration, irrespectively of time-pieces, we should obtain a singular variety of answers, but in all probability not one would give the true answer—"four seconds."

Well, there he perches, touting the while for passengers, while the wheels jar, the board quakes, the machine jolts, and then again gives a continued succession of jerks as it stops to take up and set down passengers at uncertain intervals—all trifles you will say (but there are a good many of them all the same) and incidents, to which he in time gets used and perhaps even comes to like them, after the manner of those nuns whose vows oblige them to take their night's rest in an upright posture and who after a while (such is habit) *prefer* it to a recumbent one and can't sleep lying down, so that, between ourselves, it ceases to be any penance at all, though it sounds uncommonly well as such. However, there is one duty which we can hardly fancy the conductor ever does get used to; I mean the roaring out at every stoppage the names of the places of destination. If you doubt this, wait for a frosty or, better still, a windy or a sleeting day, and when you have a very bad toothache and a very bad sore throat, try that cacophonous cry—"Ladbroke Grove Road," "Ladbroke Grove Road," "Ladbroke Grove Road" thirty or forty times in succession at the top of your voice at every halting-place, only varied by the monotonous "Eyerrup,"

the repetition of which it is so wearisome even to *hear*, and then imagine how you would feel by the time you had had a week of it.

Still it is in the nature of things that man should live by the sweat of his brow, and as long as that parable is represented by one irksome task or another the 'bus-conductor must be thankful the details of his share of labour are not more difficult of execution.

Besides good lungs, the conductor needs sharp ears to catch those instructions to which he pays so little heed that (whether from the indifference with which he receives them or from the surrounding noises which the passenger's voice is unable to surmount) he contrives very rarely to carry them out.

One day a rustic old lady who knew as little about the streets of London as about its ways, took a City 'bus at the Marble Arch, giving "Bond Street" as her destination. "All right, mum," says the conductor, but Bond Street was soon left a long way behind and yet the wheels went round: the old lady was lost in admiration at the wonderfully long ride you could get for a penny, for she had been told that would be the fare. At length the Bank came in sight, and she was turned out to meet the other old lady of Threadneedle Street — "There, mum," says the conductor, "your fourpence, please; that's as near Broad Street as I can take you."

Isn't it wonderful to think what vexations may occur by the misapprehension of a word of only one syllable when a deal of noise is going on? But this happens also with longer words. I remember a misunderstanding of

this sort of which poor Sam Lover was the victim, and *he* didn't think it a joke though *you* may.

Sam Lover was the best-hearted fellow in the world, but the most sensitive of men—nay more, of authors. He once told me that meeting a friend in a crowded supper-room just after he had published one of his most charming ballads, he asked him, amid the surrounding talk, clatter of plates, popping of champagne-corks and perhaps also of "questions," whether he had heard his new song—"The Angel's Whisper."

"Eh? . . . oh! ah! yes, indeed," said the other, thinking he had caught the title and unwilling to appear ignorant of Lover's occupations—"The dangerous Swiss boy?" . . . yes, of course I have; who hasn't?"

"The Angel's Whisper," shouted Lover, horridly disgusted and attempting to raise his tone above the din.

"The Ancient Sister? Oh yes . . . of course, of course—that's what I meant, and *very* good too; one of the *best* things you ever wrote, my dear fellow," replied the friend, as he edged away into the crowd to avoid further explanations.

I could tell you many other personal anecdotes of my dear, clever old friend Lover, a true genius if ever there was one, and it is with pride as well as pleasure I recall our long and warm-hearted intercourse. Poor Lover's ambition was to continue in his own person the traditions of Tom Moore's genius, and such was his veneration for his idol that he never discovered his own superiority, for he *was* superior to Moore in many respects, especially in the genuineness and simplicity of his character: his

voice was as sweet, and he sang his own delicious compositions—according to the feeling they expressed—with an archness and graceful playfulness, or an unaffected pathos, in neither of which moods could any contemporary musician approach him. Besides music and literature, he successfully practised art, having a ready and expressive pencil, the touch of which was at once delicate and masterly.

My recollections of Lover are accompanied by reminiscences, also personal, of Charles Lever, who seized upon Moore's mantle after it had been worn by Sam Lover; I knew him when he was practising medicine at Brussels—an unworthy follower of *Æsculapius*, for—a white sheep of the flock—he lost no opportunity of telling even his patients how he hated all the humbug of “the healing art;” he used to come into his consulting-room in a black velvet dressing-gown belted with a scarlet silk girdle and always carried a pen behind his ear, but far less for writing his prescriptions than that he might be ready for authorship again the moment he had disposed of his patient. It was not long before he broke the detested chain and soared unshackled into the realms of fancy where, not content with writing first magazine articles, and then novels, he gave to the musical world some of its most graceful English or rather Irish songs.

From these lamented geniuses the transition to the inimitable John Parry seems to come inevitably, for he was not only also as valued a friend of my own, but a spirit of the same order, the brilliancy of whose gifts placed him high, high above all contemporary and certainly all sub-

sequent, rivals, and Parry too excelled in the sister arts of music and painting: in fact he could do anything he pleased . . . *when* he was not over-excited and, as was often the case, helplessly and hopelessly nervous.

But why should we wonder at the productions and performances of such men?—they had it *in* them, and they couldn't *help* the outcome. I confess I don't believe in "village Hampdens" and "mute, inglorious Miltons:" if such exist, they *make* their way to the fore in spite of all obstacles. What says Lord Lytton?—

"Talk not of genius baffled; genius is *master* of man;
Genius does what it *must*; . . . talent does what it *can*."

Ah! I could fill, not a chapter, but a volume with character-anecdotes of the geniuses I have not only "met" but whose friendship I have enjoyed, and who, now they are gone, stand out in my recollection in brilliant relief from the vulgar crowd of other men: but we must not pursue this theme or we shall never get back to the commonplaces of life.

The conductor whom we left just now standing on his perch, will probably not quit that post nor yet that position for some hours to come, though to stand during sixteen hours at a stretch *seems* almost a "*tour de force*," and yet these public servants not only make no complaint as to the hardship but, although at every station there are relays both of drivers and conductors to relieve them on their arrival, they very rarely avail themselves of the opportunity offered.

Although the calling of a conductor has its drawbacks,

those who follow it appear to be satisfied with the compensations they find in it and seldom forsake it for any other occupation ; still I am given to understand, whether from the continuity of that standing position or from exposure to all weathers or from the many other special and inevitable disadvantages inseparable from a conductor's duties, his life is not a long one. The temptation to drink is great, and though one may rarely see a conductor inebriated, there must necessarily be a good deal of mild tippling in the course of his day.

The starting and halting-places are mostly public-houses, and as many of the fraternity meet there, sociability would naturally form one incentive to "take a glass," while beer in hot, and gin in cold, weather present snares not easily escaped by the most high-principled of conductors, especially when he has all day at his fingers' ends an uncounted supply of other people's coppers ; remember he is denied during sixteen hours of the twenty-four that indulgence, which, odious and mal-odorous as it may be to some, is still the favourite pleasure of his class.

I must support what I have already said of the general sobriety of the 'bus-conductor by adding that in all my experience I do not remember a solitary instance of intoxication on the omnibus-step. The merit of this abstinence is perhaps all the greater that I have rarely observed one decorated with a blue ribbon.

I have heard nevertheless of an Irish 'bus-conductor to whom H.E. Cardinal Manning recommended the assumption of the pledge, strengthening the precept by an allusion to his own example.

"Och, now thin," replied the Hibernian with characteristic archness, "maybe yer Iminence naided it."

H.E.'s rigid asceticism renders the joke doubly spicy.



Another who did consent to enrol himself would go up to the bar and paying twopence for a glass of water, would whisper at the same time into the barmaid's ear:—"And say, darlint; couldn't ye put a dhrap o' whiskey in it, *unbeknowns* to me?"

The wages of a conductor are 4s. a day, and as the applications for employment in that capacity are countless, that conductors should occasionally dip into the bag is scarcely to be doubted: as long, however, as they keep within moderate bounds, the Company (having no choice) necessarily winks at mild depredations, and is obliged to content itself with an estimate of average earnings. Should the conductor take advantage of this forbearance he is more closely watched, and on the repetition of the offence is irrevocably discharged; so that in his

case honesty is the best policy : not a high motive, but one which I fear forms part of the code of morality of most men. I am told that when the takes are below the normal average, the conductor will often make up the amount by throwing in his own day's pay : not that he intends to *lose* this sum, for he repays himself by instalments according to the takes of succeeding days, but he finds it expedient to maintain the level of the day's produce.

Driver and conductor, with that honour which keeps in check fellow-conspirators, divide very fairly such plunder as circumstances enable them to appropriate, the former claiming as his share the fares of all the passengers he can secure while the conductor's attention is at fault. No doubt it is to the Company's interest to allow a certain amount of speculation, as, were that entirely precluded, it might extinguish the zeal with which it is desirable their servants should tout for passengers. The driver's regular wages are six-and-thirty shillings a week, and it seems it is customary with both functionaries to account to their wives for these amounts, but whatever they can grab over and above those sums by tips, cabbages, or other windfalls, they claim a right to keep dark and spend as suits *themselves*.

These same windfalls have a great attraction for the wage-earning class ; there is a degree of adventure in their occurrence which doubles their intrinsic value. A friend of mine was telling me the other day, *à propos* of this, that he has a butler who has served him many years and is as perfect as it is given to a butler to be, but he is in the habit of accepting tips from the tradesmen and

of course also from his master's guests. One day the latter had a little confidential talk with him, in the course of which he told him he did not like the principle of tips and that if he would tell him candidly how much a year he gained in that way, he would greatly prefer adding double the amount to his wages; the man reflected a little and then replied—

“Well sir, you're very good, but I know I couldn't keep to that arrangement—I had much rather things went on as at present.”

Perhaps there was a wife in the case who would have claimed as “wages” what he considered he was entitled to retain as “fees.”

A worthy pianoforte manufacturer whom I have long known, assures me that his vanmen very much prefer taking instruments to the houses of tradesmen to conveying them to noblemen's mansions, the tips are so much more to be relied on. Whether the flunkeys absorb these little gifts as they fall into their hands for transmission, or whether there are so many supernumeraries that there is no extra work required and therefore no extra pay, I am not able to explain, but such is the fact, and in this case too it appears the tips are proportionately more prized than the regular earnings.

It is pleasant to be able to record on credible testimony that if there be some trickery among the fraternity of conductors, there are also frequent instances of honesty and conscientiousness. A conductor I wot of, in counting his receipts one Saturday night, found a sovereign which must have been given him in place of

a shilling. Having probably forgotten there was such a place as Scotland Yard, to which the good conductors go when they come upon a find, he only thought of his duty to the Company and to himself, and considered that of those two it was he who had the better right to profit by the oversight of his fare. On the Monday, however, a young man who got in, asked him whether it was possible he had given him, on the previous Saturday, a sovereign instead of a shilling, as he always took a guinea for his wages on Saturday, and when he got home he found in his pocket the shilling he thought he had given, and the sovereign was gone. The conductor must have been sensitive enough to feel what a loss this sum would be to a poor fellow who had worked all the week for it, so he frankly admitted he had found the gold coin in his bag that evening, and at once handed it to the inquirer.

Another conductor, happening to turn his eye upon the seat a passenger had just left, observed a rather bulky little parcel lying there; his first impulse was to take it up, but by the time the chink had satisfied him as to the contents, the man after whom he now vainly looked had disappeared in the busy London thoroughfare: *this* conductor was also an honest man, and as the passenger who he supposed had left the packet behind him was an *habitué*, he put the precious object in his pocket and said nothing about it. Next day passed and the supposed owner came not, but on the third day he appeared and took his place in the corner.

"Would you believe it," said he to the conductor, "last Monday—in fact, the very last time I saw you—I was

carrying a considerable sum to a bank for a customer who has always shown great confidence in me, and when, how or where I can have dropped it or have been robbed of it I can't think, but when I got there, lo and behold you, it was gone! I shall never forget the turn it gave me, and for two days I've been unable to settle down to anything, hunting over every corner, and going to every place I'd called at that day. It's absolute ruin to me."

"What was the sum?" asked the conductor.

"Eighty sovereigns there was, done up in that bag,— eighty sovereigns, and I'm not likely to forget it."

The conductor drew out a packet from his leather pouch.

"Perhaps that might be it?" he said, as he dropped it on the loser's knees, "but you'd better count them."

The joy and astonishment of the loser were boundless, but not so the demonstration of his gratitude, for he handed the finder only ten shillings.

It might be a liberal gift for a man in his position, but *subjectively* speaking, what was it in comparison with the loss he was so vehemently deploring just before? No doubt if the conductor had but let him go on, he would have made some extravagant remark as to being willing to give "ten *pounds* out of his own pocket rather than not find and restore it," &c.; but then things look so different from different points of view. What says the mother in Hood's song of the lost child:—

"Oh! if I 'ad him in these 'ere motherly arms, wouldn't I 'ug 'im and kiss him!

Ah! I never knowed how precious he was, for a child ain't 'arf a child till you miss 'im.

What, Billy ! . . . Why, that's my Billy as sartin as sin !
Come 'ere at wunst, yer little wretch, and I'll break every bone
in yer skin."



The conductor assured me he felt for the man, and was very glad the money had fallen into his hands. "At the same time," he added, "it would have been better for me if I had carried out the law, and taken it to Scotland Yard, for I should then have got the regulation percentage."

A passenger one day in taking out his fare dropped a sixpence; he stooped down to pick it up, but as if by magic found it changed into a half-sovereign, and to add to his surprise saw also a sixpence glittering in the corner; he prudently made up his mind (and his conscience) that the former was his, and the latter must have slipped through some one else's fingers, and instead of greedily pocketing both, generously pointed out the latter to the conductor, with a recommendation to

find the owner. Passengers, therefore, may be unscrupulous as well as conductors, and we seem to forget that the former are no more a *class* than the latter.

The success of the L.G.O.C., which divides some 12 per. cent. to its shareholders, has naturally provoked an active rivalry, and "proprietary 'buses," as well as those of other companies, have long "infested" the streets; their system has been to start by underselling the L.G.O.C., but as two can play at that game, and their resources are limited, the result has almost universally been their inevitable withdrawal, when they have been only too glad to be bought up by the Company. At the present time, however, there is certainly one (if not more than one) formidable rival on the roads, and the L.R.C.C., though it may not absolutely become the Aaron's rod of other omnibus-rods, bids fair to earn a very prominent place among public conveyances. It has made a very plucky start, and has rapidly gained favour by the liberal and attractive character of its appointments, and the extraordinary moderation of its charges,—a dodge which, however, can't be kept up for ever.

No doubt the chaffing that goes on between the officials of contending companies forms a cheerful episode in the unvaried life of the conductor; sometimes the jeering is carried somewhat beyond the limits of politeness, and it is not quite clear that the upstarts like to be styled "pirates" by the L.G.O.C., which seems to claim a monopoly of the road, and fiercely to resent any interference with what it evidently, from long habit, considers its exclusive privileges. It could not, however, be expected

but that (as usually happens) its great success would suggest to others a similar enterprise.

One day I saw an elderly lady standing (like the proverbial donkey between two thistles) behind two omnibuses at Piccadilly corner, unable to decide whether she should patronise the Company, or "Mr. John Constable, Omnibus Proprietor." The Company's conductor immediately stepped down, and with an hospitable and amiable "This way, lady," conductor-ed her to his door.

"What 'ave you got to do to call away my fare?" roared out the abandoned one.

"*Your* fare!" retorted the other, "why you're a pirate; this 'ere lady wants a ree-speccable omnibus, she do—not one o' your straw-lined styes."

It is not unusual as two rival 'buses are crossing each other to hear the Company's conductor throw the favourite word "pirate" at the other: "That's good," holloed out in reply a fellow thus attacked, "and you only a sarvint! *we's* proprietors, *we* is: it'll be a long time afore *you're* that."

This rivalry, however, has had a marked effect in improving the manners and general bearing of the omnibus-conductor towards his fares; for, formerly, there certainly was a very appreciable difference between the Company's servants and those of the proprietary omnibuses, much to the advantage of the former. Whether it is a feeling of self-interest that has contributed to this change or whether we may attribute it to a higher motive it is difficult to say; let it, however, suffice to the public that the fact is obvious.

I have been glad to record instances of honesty, civility, and even of humour on the part of these individuals, and I do not know, all things considered, whether the latter are not those most to their credit; but I cannot recall more than one example of a conductor making a fortune, and never, as far as I have observed, does he grow fat even though he may live largely on "cabbages;" nor do I know of more than that one who could have retired to plant these or to enjoy his *otium cum digging o' taties*. It is true that was a very exceptional—I might say a peerless—case, for (incredible as it may seem) this particular conductor was actually *made a peer of the realm*! He began life as a be-buttoned imp—imp-udent I believe you; for, short of that, of course, he would never have climbed the social ladder. Passing from the knife-board of the knife-house to that of the omnibus, he long remained at what *he* was pleased to consider the wrong end of it, since in vain did he aspire to the handling of the ribbons: if at that time any arrogant person sent that youth to Coventry, he, without suspecting it, was starting him on the road to fortune; Fate had other ribbons in store for him to handle; ribbons so strong that he was destined to swarm up them to the envied goal. On the summit of his be-ribboned *mât de Cocagne* was the coronet which he saw not yet, for it was veiled by the clouds which hide from us our futurity, and he even dreamed not of its presence there; those clouds had, not a "silver," but a silken, lining, and when he had clambered to the prescribed point they rolled away and the coveted aureole of the canonized millionaire dropped

almost unbidden on his head: ribbons may pursue him even yet; who shall say his spotless white waistcoat may not one day be traversed by a blue one? Let not, however, this solitary example lead the conductor to presume, let it on the contrary check his cheek, for I repeat, this bit of luck is unquestionably exceptional—that proverbial “exception which proves the rule,” for as regards the normal conductor the chances are that, like his colleague the omnibus-horse, noble only in his devotedness to duty, he drops in harness and as he departs this life to travel on, let us hope, a smoother road, we can scarcely accord him less praise than is comprised in the modest epitaph—

HE TOOK HIS LAST FARE WELL.



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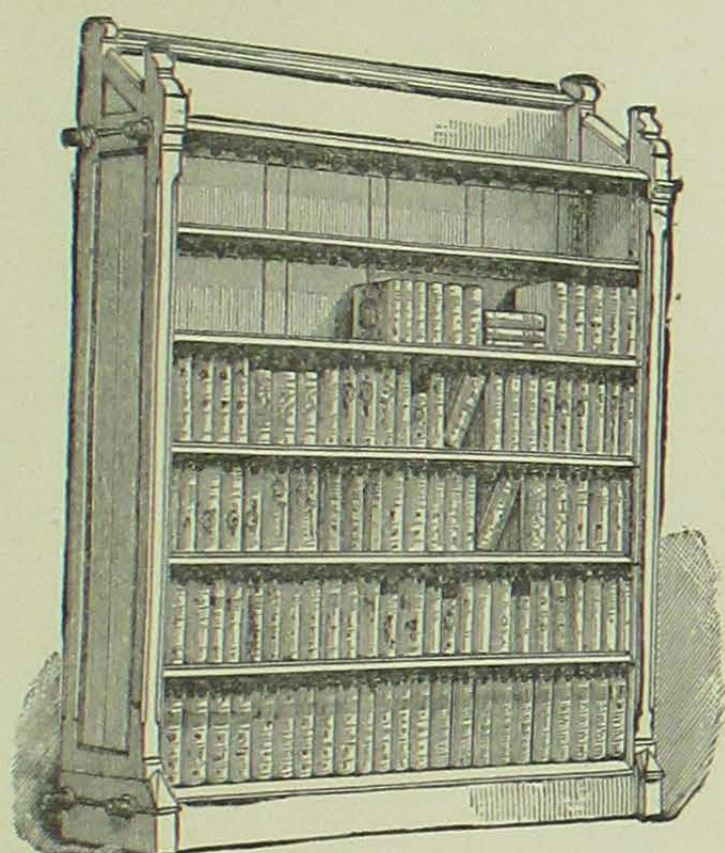
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